

**INDIA'S  
NATION BUILDERS**

**D. N. Bannerjea**



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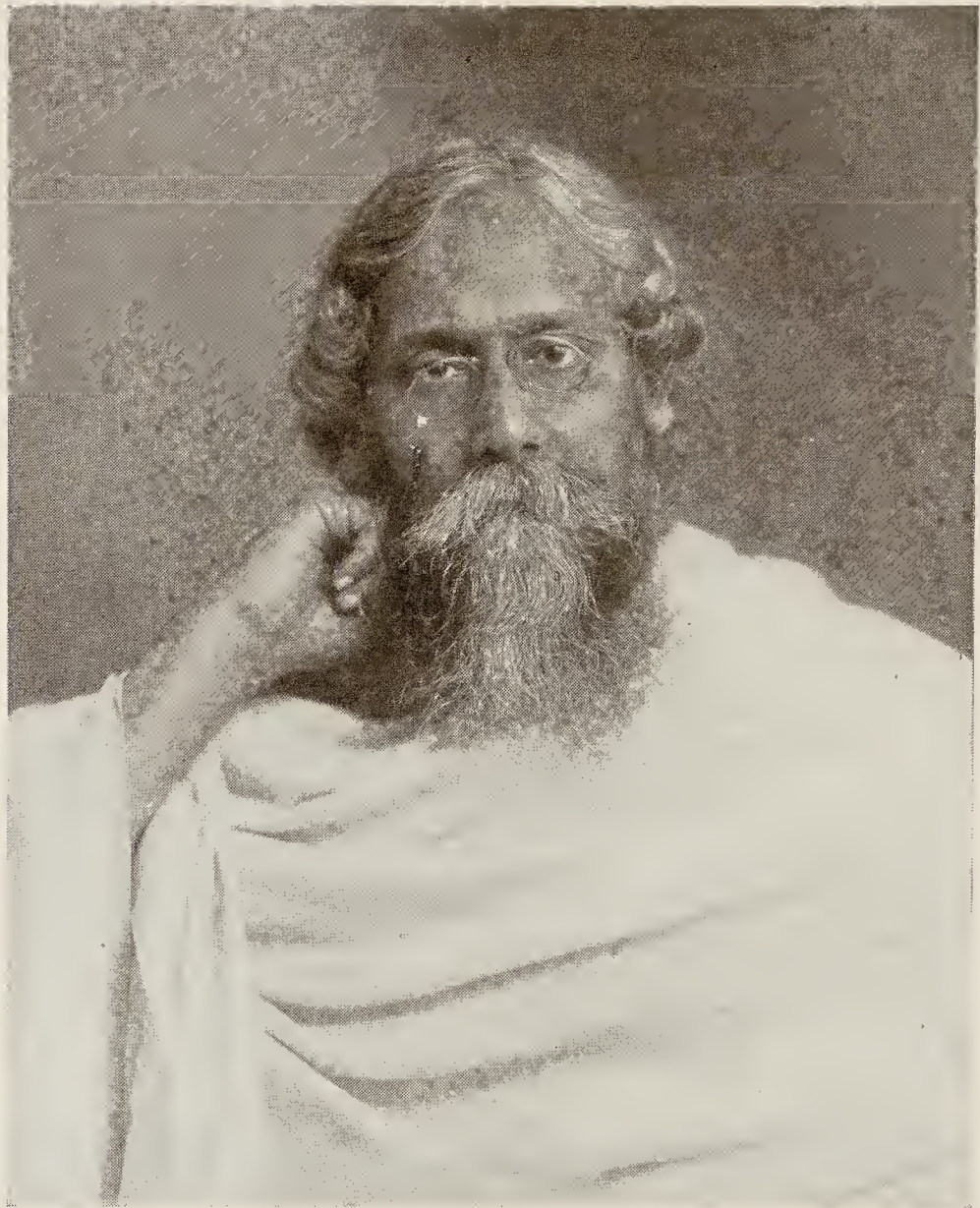










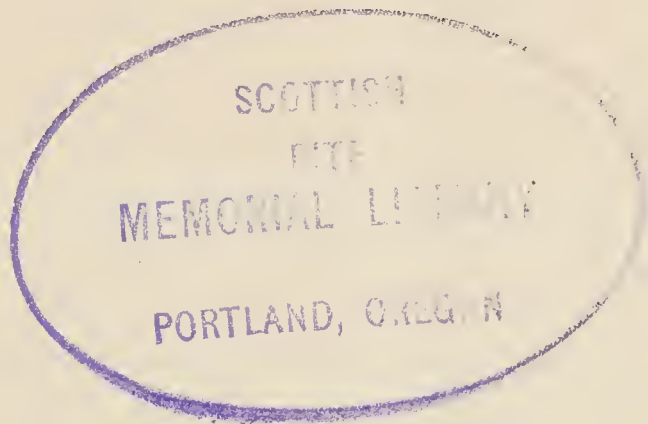


SIR RABINDRA NATH TAGORE.




# INDIA'S NATION BUILDERS

BY  
D. N. BANNERJEA



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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

IT has been a great pleasure to undertake the present task, in compliance with the request to write short but reasonably complete narratives of Indians that have served as pathfinders in the difficult work of nation-building in India. But delightful in itself though the writing of the book has been, it has not been quite so easy as one might have expected, by reason of the paucity of reliable material, or difficulties in having access to such material as is actually obtainable. There is an abundance of books that may be used as running commentaries on the various movements in India, social as well as political, but there is unfortunately, a regrettable dearth of authentic biographies from which one might glean salient facts, dates or leading episodes in the careers of great men.

It is with a view of filling such gaps that the present modest attempt is made. But our object has not been so much to chronicle bare incidents as to strive to reveal the personality of the man whose contribution to one or the other of the liberalising movements in India comes under review. How far such attempts have been successful, we leave it to the readers to judge.

In the case of Sir Rabindra Nath Tagore, we have deliberately abstained from recording the personal

incidents of his earlier life, since these have been so graphically described for us, by the poet himself in "My Reminiscences"\* and also since his personality and the fruition of his creative genius in the realm of Art and Literature have a more permanent interest than the details of his academic and poetic life. In any case his spiritual vision and the subtle and attractive garb with which he clothes the commonest of sentiments are the most outstanding features of the poet's entire career. Similarly in the cases of one or two others who, after a short-lived and strenuous activity in their respective spheres have since retired, for various reasons, from public life, we have avoided going into personal incidents.

The writer is in the fullest sympathy with the aspirations of his educated countrymen and with their demand that a substantial measure of self-government must be given to India immediately, in so far as it is compatible with the security and stability of the Empire as a whole. And it is the writer's firm conviction that a genuine concession to this demand, here and now, would strengthen the bonds between England and India, and that eventual fullest autonomy within the Empire would leave the destinies of India and the mother country indissolubly linked.

The author desires, however, to repudiate all methods of agitation that are not strictly constitutional, and to dissociate himself from any propaganda that exploits race-hatred to promote its

\* Macmillan and Co., London, 7s. 6d.



ends. We sincerely feel that religious, social and political reform must go hand in hand, so that the prevailing anomalies in the Indian communities may not furnish a handle for the reactionary obstruction of the bureaucracy in India, nor that indifference to the demands of India's social emancipation may accentuate the revolutionary destruction of certain misguided idealists. There must be an advance towards the goal, through all the various avenues of approach.

Though the main ideas and opinions expressed in the book are my own, I take this opportunity to say that the study of "The Renaissance in India," by the Rev. C. F. Andrews, first aroused my interest in the study of Indian problems. This gifted writer surveyed the modern situation in India from the point of view of missionary activity: I have tried to review the modern developments in India in close association with their founders, in the light of their bearing on the birth and the gradual consolidation of the National Idea, as the result of the West meeting the East.

I express my thanks to the authorities of the British Museum for affording me every facility for getting at original documents, periodicals and books in general.

My thanks are likewise due to Colonel Josiah C. Wedgwood, M.P., for always assisting me with advice and suggestions in my literary ventures, and to the Rt. Hon. H. A. L. Fisher, the President of the Board of Education, for his inspiring glimpses into the character and life-work of the late Mr. G. K.

Gokhale. His appreciation of Mr. Gokhale's life-work enhanced my admiration for the noble Indian patriot, and particularly as Mr. Fisher's appreciation had behind it the weight and authority of a famous scholar, and one of the foremost educationalists now engaged in revolutionising the conditions of education in this country.

I should finally express my thanks to Mr. A. G. Gardiner, of *The Daily News* and Mr. J. A. Spender, of *The Westminster Gazette*, for always encouraging the interpretation of Indian ideals and aspirations, with a view to the education of public opinion in this country.



## CONTENTS

---

INTRODUCTION	-	-	-	-	-	-	II
I. SIR RABINDRA NATH TAGORE	-	-	-	-	-	-	21
II. RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY	-	-	-	-	-	-	40
III. KESHAB CHANDRA SEN	-	-	-	-	-	-	53
IV. SWAMI DAYA-NANDA SARASWATI	-	-	-	-	-	-	70
V. SIR SYED AHMAD KHAN	-	-	-	-	-	-	95
VI. DADABHOY NAOROJI	-	-	-	-	-	-	115
VII. SWAMI VIVEKANANDA	-	-	-	-	-	-	128
VIII. GOPALA KRISHNA GOKHALE	-	-	-	-	-	-	146
IX. M. K. GANDHI	-	-	-	-	-	-	164
X. KALI CHARAN BANURJI	-	-	-	-	-	-	174
XI. BAL GANGADHAR TILAK	-	-	-	-	-	-	181
XII. BEPIN CHANDRA PAL	-	-	-	-	-	-	197
XIII. ARABINDA GHOSE	-	-	-	-	-	-	206
XIV. LALA LAJPAT RAI	-	-	-	-	-	-	213
XV. SURENDRA NATH BANNERJEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	225





## INTRODUCTION

THE writer offers no apology, since none is needed, for selecting the present moment as opportune for the presentation to the public, British as well as Indian, of the following character-sketches of eminent Indians that have figured, more or less conspicuously, as pioneers of movements which have taken their rise in, and contributed towards the making of, modern India. It will be obvious to the reader that New India presents rather a perplexing development, in which the old order and the new are at close grips, victory being assured to the new, however painfully slow may seem the movement towards the triumph of the progressive forces.

Discriminating critics may regret the absence of names from these essays of Ranade, Sir Subrahmania Aiyar and Sir Krishna Nair, at present Minister for Education in India. But the distinguished services to India rendered by these great men are to be dealt with, it is hoped, in another volume, and in a somewhat different connection. For a similar reason we have refrained from including in the following chapters, narratives of the illustrious careers of sympathetic Englishmen and Englishwomen who have disinterestedly promoted the cause of India's political emancipation. Among names that are

enshrined in Indian hearts stand out those of Allan Octavian Hume, Sir Henry Cotton and the late Sir William Wedderburn, as bright shining lights on the Indian political horizon. We have been, in the main, concerned with the working of certain progressive forces in India, forces that are mainly the result of western education impinging on a rich heritage of indigenous ideals.

The writer strongly feels that because of the great world-war, the idea of nationality, always sacred and inspiring has somehow been thrust into the foreground of political thought. It was thus evident that people's minds would be naturally more receptive of the imperative claims of "India: a Nation" than ever before. What the flower of the Allied democracy are to-day fighting and dying for, Indian progressives and reformers are living for: to vindicate, that is to say, the principle of nationality, to assert the national idea and to demonstrate the inherent right of all nations, great or small, to work out their own destinies, untrammelled by the vested interests of bureaucracies or military oligarchies.

The series begins with the chapter on Sir Rabrindra Nath Tagore, not because he is the earliest pioneer of modern India, but because he is to-day best known in contemporary England, not to speak of Europe and America. We have not dealt with the various "nation-builders" throughout, in anything like chronological sequence, but mainly on a rough estimate of their influence on Indian life generally. But broadly speaking, the order of treatment has been a purely convenient arrangement, and no invidious

distinctions should be inferred from priority of position.

It was also felt that something must be done to remove the impression, the very misleading and erroneous impression, that Indian leaders have been, and are, impervious to modernist tendencies and oblivious to the numerous evils that lurk in the Indian body-politic. None is more merciless in denunciation of social and other evils than the Indian reformers themselves ; none so unsparing in critical judgment as they. That India must set her house in order, and apply the surgeon's knife to the cankerous growths that she has so far encouraged in her civic and communal life is the constant burden of their teaching. From Ram Mohan to Tagore, from Syed Ahmad Khān to Ranade, they have never ceased from criticising the evils—the serious and fundamental evils—that are to be found in the Indian character and mentality, precisely as English reformers and French, too, have ever striven to remedy the evils that hamper the growth of the nation's life, and have considered it a duty to expose the evils that were sapping its vitality.

It is for this reason that we strongly feel that Mr. William Archer could scarcely have chosen a more ill-starred moment than the present for a wholesale disparagement of Indian publicists, and a scathing indictment of the Indian tradition in its entirety, in his recently published book : " India and the Future." Not that we are afraid of criticism. We sincerely feel that India's best friends are those that lay their fingers on her festering sores. The fault, if



any, that we have to find with Mr. Archer is not that he is critical, but that his criticisms betray lack of judgment, of the historical conscience, and full knowledge of India's past and present. We are reluctantly driven to confess that the learned journalist's sole knowledge concerning India consists of a bundle of impressions, gleaned from ignorant and hostile sources, and capped with "the high authority of Lord Sydenham of Combe." By the way, the only other statesman in the Empire that Mr. Archer did not consult while writing his book is Lord Milner. But to pass on.

We are in the heartiest agreement with the learned author's dictum that those "Hinduisers" in the West who exaggerate everything Indian that is good, and allegorise away everything Indian that is repulsive, morbid, retrogressive, render India doubtful service. So far, so good. But we strongly question, not Mr. Archer's sincerity, but the propriety of his method in making the pendulum swing to the other extreme. With due respect to him, we beg leave to remind Mr. Archer that in his eagerness to break a lance or two with Orientalists and others, he seems to have quite forgotten all about the scantiness of the material at his disposal. While passing judgment on the religious scriptures of India, he incidentally forgets that progressive Hinduism does not depend on verses from the Vedas, and, further, he leans upon the broken reed of opinion proceeding from unfriendly quarters. It was hardly necessary to quote Max Müller, the great orientalist and friend of India, and labour the point that there are inchoate and inconsistent texts

in the Hindu scriptures, since Hinduism is a continuity and not a hidebound ecclesiastical system. In its lower developments, Hinduism presents hideous features; the tyranny of the priest, of caste and repressive doctrine, but which religion is perfect in its cruder aspects and formulations?

Mr. Archer, again, lays himself open to the very accusation which he levels against young students from India, viz., that they are fond of "extravagant rhetoric." Instead of saying that the masses in India have not been educated, and owing to their illiteracy are sinking very low, our learned contemporary uses flamboyant phraseology and says: "A long chain of prehistoric and historic circumstances, ultimately traceable to geographical conditions, has reduced the masses to a condition of stagnant barbarism" (p. 26). What is this, if not "extravagant rhetoric," not even pardonable as in the case of Indian students, because the medium of expression, in his case, is his own mother-tongue. Who is to blame for the neglect of mass education in India? The masses themselves? or "the classes reduced to an even less desirable state of inveterately self-satisfied pseudo-civilisation?"

But even the above attempts at describing new India pale into insignificance, when Mr. Archer, the journalist, assumes the *rôle* of Pope of Rome and prophesies—a function discarded by the Vatican now-a-days—that India "may one day come to date the dawn of her regeneration from the Battle of Plassey." For aught we know, Mr. Archer is quite right this time. In any case, we



who are thoroughly loyal to the Imperial economy believe that in the British connection with India is implicit the guarantee of her political emancipation. Only we expected that the learned author would consider that after all we are human, and not "rub it in" so hard. For example, our learned friend would not go the length of telling the Belgians that they may one day come to date the dawn of their regeneration from the fall of Antwerp, supposing the Germans had been ranged on our side. I know—and rejoice to know—that the analogy does not hold, but it is in the light of the principle of nationality that we should pass judgments on other nations, and pay some heed to their sensitiveness and susceptibilities.

Arrogating to himself papal infallibility, Mr. Archer lays the lash upon the backs of all Indian publicists, progressive or reactionary, moderate or extremist. At one moment we see Gokhale bleed under the crash of Mr. Archer's sjambok, the next moment Ranade is laid low. We hold no brief for Ranade when he asks Indians to consider themselves "God's chosen people." But Mr. Archer would be the first to consider himself as one of the elect, and in fact through his interesting articles, he has been giving, during the war, able and forceful expression to his patriotic impulses, and in our judgment quite properly. But then, why should Ranade be pilloried for expressing his patriotic instincts? It is only human nature to cherish one's traditions and ideals. The wail of lamentation, however, becomes very deep and touching



when the complaint is voiced forth: "The wisest of Indians cannot get over the inveterate habit of admitting in one breath that India's past is her disaster, and asserting in the next that it is her glory and her pride. The two propositions are not absolutely irreconcilable; *but the first alone is of any practical moment* (the italics are ours). If only the Indian politician *would cling fast to that*, and give up talking as though British rule had involved a decline from some high estate of splendour and felicity, he would do much to hasten the advent of a bright future" (p. 171). Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Mr. Archer hath spoken!

With such opiate doses would the gifted writer, the exponent of the newest Imperialism, send refractory Indian children to bed! While the *Times* is to-day lavishing unstinted praise on Mr. Gokhale, and the *Round Table* has appreciated—*vide* the issue of December, 1917—the points of his criticism, Mr. Archer raises his prejudices and preconceptions to the perfection of a science, with a view of demolishing the men of straw that his imagination has set up.

In the scheme of Empire Mr. Archer sees no hope of any British citizen right being conferred on the Indian in the colonies of the Empire. He very wisely says that it is best "for each race to keep itself to itself and not seek to swamp or submerge its neighbours" (p. 175 footnote). And yet in the introduction he recommends that "steps should be taken to make the service of *India* attractive to the best class of young *Englishmen*" (the italics are ours). Surely if

Empire stands for anything, it involves a policy of give-and-take. According to Mr. Archer, Empire signifies only "take," but no "give."

One word more, and we have done with the new Goliath that has risen to shatter the superstitions of India's greatness. In common with other readers, we have been amused with the display of learning concerning Indian affairs. But we shall ask only two questions of Mr. Archer. First, can he point to a single historic instance of a nation that has risen to great heights through the systematic despising of her past heritage, as he would fain see done by the Indians? And secondly, if India's past is her disaster, why does he so heroically "go for" the Anglo-Indians who, believing in Mr. Archer's hypothesis, carry it to its logical conclusion in practice? Surely, Mr. Archer does not expect all Anglo-Indians to be artists, and literary critics and philanthropic institutions!

As we lay down the very expensive volume with a sense of disappointment, we discover the secret of Mr. Archer's trenchant remarks. He says many unkind things, because he is entrenched behind the belief that "eventual self-government" is good for India. He does not say when that millennium is coming, but it would appear some time before this planet becomes unfit for human habitation.

We quite see that India has much leeway to make up before her sons and daughters can enter upon a richer inheritance. But the path to that goal of perfection, should perfection be ever within human grasp, would not lie through excessive self-laudation,

much less through paralysing self-depreciation and despair, but through discipline and self-control and self-reverence. It is with a view to elucidating this position that the accompanying essays have been written.

To conclude : nothing could be more unreasonable than the following *ipse dixit* of Mr. Archer : " Europe is struggling out of the ages of faith into the age of knowledge, some of the worst of its evils proceed from the very rapidity of its movement ; whereas the evils of India are those of secular stagnation " (p. 6). We quite agree that " secular stagnation " *has been* so far the evil of India, but one should have thought that *The Times* and *The Morning Post* had already taken alarm at the rapidity of the movement with which liberal ideas are replacing conservatism and decadence, even in the most conservative of traditions. India entertains no illusions concerning her inferiority to Europe in the realms of science and mechanical efficiency or organisation. All that she demands is the establishment of a profound association with the west, on lines of right understanding and mutual respect. Less than this she does not desire ; more than this she could not reasonably expect.

Without making any pretensions to powers of clairvoyance, we might, perhaps, suggest that what Mr. Archer is thinking about is the deplorable condition of the masses in India. But the only panacea for that evil is free and compulsory *education* so ably advocated by the late Mr. Gokhale. The hopeless illiteracy of the masses



does, indeed, constitute India's "actual state of degradation," to quote Mr. Archer, and the remedy consists not in knocking down phantoms in Indian character and traditions with missiles of ponderous phrases, but in pleading for the inauguration of a more enlightened educational policy.

## SIR RABINDRA NATH TAGORE

WE begin this series of character-sketches with Tagore, not because he takes precedence, in order of time, of other eminent nation-builders of India, but because we feel that his name is best known to the reading public in this country. No other Indian occupies, at present, a more prominent place in the estimation of competent critics. And if towards the end of a highly appreciative chapter, we become somewhat critical of Tagore's expressed ideas on politics and social philosophy, it is with no intention of minimising his influence as the poet of the Indian Re-awakening, but solely under the honest conviction that constant thinking about universal ideas renders poets—and he will be a bold man indeed who questions Tagore's pre-eminent position as poet—somewhat indifferent to concrete issues and to the desire of reducing ideas to a coherent system. We shall offer our criticism in a spirit of reverence towards one of the greatest men that modern India has produced.

Sir Rabindra Nath, the Nobel Prize Laureate for 1913, is the most highly gifted poet of the Renaissance in India in its various aspects—literary, religious, social and philosophical. He has given, in language understood of the West, eloquent and forceful expression to the emotions and longings

that stir the heart of New India. But he is much more than merely a brilliant literary exponent of the aspiration and outlook of awakened India. He is a poet, to be sure, but he is a prophet as well—one who beckons us on to the future and asks us to lay the foundations of our national life deep and broad, on righteousness, unity and love.

Tagore's magic minstrelsies have called a new India into being, sweeping the chords with the inspiration that comes from a new vision, a new discovery of the spiritual, a new synthesis of the contradictions of life. The power of his song has welded us into a fuller unity, the vibrations of his music have thrilled us into novel conceptions of duty and self-sacrifice and patriotism.

Tagore is the poet of disillusioned India, of modernised India, conscious of her destiny. Contrasted with Kipling, the roughrider of Imperialism, Tagore is the delicate poet of national culture. If it were excess of sentiment to suggest that Nationalism is the poem of Tagore, we might perhaps say that there is no other theme of human interest so near his heart and so easily transmutable into his music as national regeneration and hope. Kipling made us despair : Tagore bids us be of good cheer. It is impossible to overestimate the amount of mischief that has been done by the famous lines of Kipling ; especially as the supplementary lines are so easily forgotten :

For East is East, and West is West,  
And never the twain shall meet."

They meet in Tagore, who represents in his person-



ality and in his poems a spiritual fusion of East and West. While proud of the Indian continuity, he is not ashamed of enriching and replenishing that continuity by assimilating elements of Western culture, which serve to fill the gaps in indigenous tradition. In so doing, he breaks away entirely from those mean and parochial views concerning human destiny which assign to one nation the task of ruling and subduing for all time, and to another nation the duty of perpetual subordination. In Tagore, East and West meet as fully enfranchised partners rather than in the *rôle* of slave and master, or factory-hand and employer.

“ This is my prayer to Thee, my Lord,—  
Give me the strength never to disown the poor  
Or bend my knees before insolent might.”

But his national philosophy is not sectarian, racial, denominational or narrow-minded. He is conscious of the limitations and deficiencies in the older phases of Indian tradition. His Nationalist faith does not delight in blowing its own trumpet or magnifying the virtues of India and the vices of other countries. That way lies jingoism. To Tagore “ East and West ” connote not simply convenient geographical distinctions but culture-grounds of views, conceptions, and practices which by their harmonious interaction enrich the content of life.

Unlike the watchword of Swami Dayananda Saraswati, “ Back to the Vedas,” that of Tagore would presumably be : “ Forward with life.” Yet both these men have been progressive.

Tagore is pre-eminently a social reformer. As

adherents of the Brahmo Samaj, both he and his people have broken away from caste, purdah and the spirit of religious insularity. He finds it difficult to believe that caste and nationality are compatible with each other. Politics aim at national solidarity : caste makes for endless distinctions. A great national unification implies, therefore, a great revolt against caste trammels, a strong impulse towards reconciliation of conflicting interests, the mutual composing of differences, rhythmic heart-beats as the result of engaging in common pursuits as brothers, co-equals. In India, caste is the greatest obstruction in the pathway of reform.

“ When I realise the hypnotic hold which this gigantic system of cold-blooded repression has taken on the minds of our people, whose social body it has so completely entwined in its endless coils that the free expression of manhood, under the direst necessity, has become almost an impossibility, the only remedy that suggests itself to me is to educate them out of their trance. . . . If to break up the feudal system, and the tyrannical conventionalism of the mediæval church, which had outraged the healthier instincts of humanity, Europe needed the thought impulse of the Renaissance and the fierce struggle of the Reformation, do we not need in a greater degree an overwhelming influx of higher social ideas before a place can be found for true political thinking ? Must we not have that greater vision of humanity which will impel us to shake off the fetters that shackle our individual life before we begin to think of national freedom ?

His vision of his country's future is such as to hold the imagination in thrall.

“ Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high,  
Where knowledge is free,  
Where the world has not been broken up by narrow domestic  
walls,  
Where words come out from the depth of truth,  
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way in the  
dreary desert sand of dead habit,  
Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening  
thought and action—  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country  
awake ! ”

Since Tagore is the poet of the Renaissance, his millennium is not in the past. And yet no living poet could set greater store by the past traditions and culture of India than he. He is Indian to the backbone, and since he is proud of being an Indian, New India is proud of him. His gospel is that of self-respect, self-reliance and national self-realisation. It is not difficult to understand his national fervour when we bear in mind that a keen sense of nationality is characteristic even of men with world-wide sympathies. Tagore believes in India : a nation. And yet this nation is not to cut itself off from the main currents of modern thought, or isolate itself from the spiritual acquisitions of sister nations, nor yet is India to delude herself with the belief that mere trading on the past would lead to aught but moral degeneracy. But, at the same time, in the spiritual federation of nations, India, according to him, should occupy a place of honour as the Mother of Nations. And who could urge this plea with greater consistency and authority than the poet-prophet of the Indian Renaissance, who, by his literary contributions and



an eminently useful and irreproachable life, has enhanced the status of India in the eyes of the intellectual world ?

Tagore's evangel is : " cultivate the spirit of invincible optimism ; believe in life ; live worthy of life." W. B. Yeats endorses this with a statement from someone who asserts that Tagore is the first Indian poet who has not " refused to live." But in not " refusing to live " Tagore has not only benefited India but has placed in some measure the whole religious world (including Christendom) under a deep obligation. For the bane of the religious life in the past has been a morbid, too overbearing sense of sin, a depressing concentration on the inherent vileness of human interests and attachments, a sense of the remoteness of God from the arena of mundane interests, and a persistent pursuit of " the soul's salvation " instead of the soul's enrichment through service and love.

" In this laborious world of Thine, tumultuous with toil and  
with struggle,  
Among hurrying crowds, shall I stand before Thee, face to  
face ?  
And when my work shall be done in this world,  
O King of Kings, alone and speechless shall I stand  
before Thee, face to face ? "

" Thus it is that Thy joy in me is so full. Thus it is that  
Thou hast come down to me. O Thou Lord of all heavens,  
where would be Thy love if I were not ? Thou hast taken me  
as Thy partner of all this wealth. In my heart is the endless  
play of Thy delight. In my heart Thy will is ever taking  
shape."

Tagore's intense religious mysticism, combined with buoyant joy in life's varied interests, produces

a resultant patriotism which is chastened with a sense of limitation and yet is audacious and progressive in its design.

The *Trumpet* represents India's contribution, through Tagore, to the Empire's war poetry. The poem is a witness to his profound perturbation of spirit over the Empire's death-grapple with the organised militarism of the Central Powers. His loyalty reflects the loyalty of enlightened India to the best interests of an Empire which, with all its failings, rests primarily on moral suasion rather than on brute force. We cannot resist quoting at least one line from *The Trumpet* :

“ . . . For to-night thy trumpet shall be sounded.  
From thee I had asked peace, only to find shame.  
Now I stand before thee, help me to don my armour,  
Let hard blows of trouble strike fire into my life,  
Let my heart beat in pain—beating the drum of thy victory.  
My hands shall be utterly emptied to take up thy trumpet.”

But in spite of his war poems, Sir Rabindra Nath Tagore is an uncompromising lover of Peace and concord among the Nations. One of his utterances made in Japan is “ that the vital ambition of all *militarist* civilisations is to obtain an exclusive monopoly of the Devil ! ” He regrets that in the twentieth century “ the unspeakable filth of the centuries is being churned up ” in direct violation of the Sermon on the Mount, as Christian nations are flying at each other's throats. He warns Japan against accepting European “ equality ” on a military basis.

But Tagore is at his best, both in crystallising his philosophy of war and in expressing India's sense of loyalty, in his latest war poem, *The Oarsmen*.

We reproduce the poem here, with the exception of the first stanza.

“ Do you hear the roar of death through the listening hush of distance,

And there rings the Captain's voice in the dark,  
' Come, sailors, for the time in the haven is over ! '

Whom do you blame, brothers ? Bow your heads down !  
The sin has been yours and ours,  
The heat growing in the heart of God for ages—  
The cowardice of the weak, the arrogance of the strong, the  
greed of fat prosperity, the rancour of the deprived,  
pride of race and insult to man—  
Has burst God's peace raging in storm. . . .

Stop your bluster of abuse and self-praise, my friends,  
And with the calm of silent prayer on your brows sail forward  
to the shore of the new world. . . .

We do not fear you, O monster : for we have lived every  
moment of our life by conquering you,  
And we died with the faith that Peace is true and Good is  
true, and true is the eternal One !

If the deathless dwell not in the heart of Death, if glad wisdom  
bloom not bursting the sheath of sorrow,  
If sin do not die of its own revealment, if pride break not  
under its load of decorations,  
Then whence comes the hope that drives these men from  
their homes like stars rushing to their death in the  
morning light ?  
Shall the value of the martyrs' blood and the mothers' tears  
be utterly lost in the dust of the earth, not buying  
Heaven with their price ?  
And when Man bursts his mortal bounds, is not the Boundless  
revealed in that moment ? ”

One word more about Tagore's poetry. He is the first Indian poet that introduces a democratic conception of God in religious verse. It is no doubt true that the entire Hindu philosophy of God as an all-



pervasive Reality, of which individuals are so many isolated self-expressions, is in its higher phases democratic, in the sense that in its most sublime developments at least, it leaves little scope for crouching and cringing before a localised divinity, seated in aristocratic detachment from human affairs. But students of Indian religious experience also know that sublime intellectual abstractions seldom afford a basis for that passionate devotion to an object of worship which serves as a guide through the experiences of life. In India, though Reason has soared above all limitations and attributes that gather round human personality, in its definition of Divine Essence denying to *It* even such an important function as character, yet the profound religious instincts of the people have led them to bestow passionate worship on some *manifestations* of Brahma, the Infinite, the Actionless, the Eternal One, the One without a second, the pure Being.

In the Worship of Ishwara, then, devotees have not refrained from showing abject humility, have used most slighting and even degrading epithets about themselves in their desire to exalt the Object of Worship, the personal God which claims and purifies allegiance.

But Tagore's personal God is described as "Brother," "Friend," even though He is "Lord of my life" and "My King." Compare his beautiful hymn :

"Day after day, O Lord of my life  
I shall stand before Thee, face to face," etc.

We now come to his political and social philosophy, or rather his attempts at evolving one. In "Nationalism" (Messrs. Macmillan & Co., 1917: page 97) Tagore uses these words: "Our real problem in India is not political. It is social. This is a condition not only prevailing in India, but among all nations. I do not believe in an exclusive political interest. Politics in the West have dominated western ideals, and we in India are trying to imitate you." We have no quarrel with Sir Rabindra Nath the Poet in his not believing "in an exclusive political interest." It would be just as hard for some of us not endowed with poetic gifts to believe "in an exclusive poetic interest." Gifts may not determine one's launching on a political career, but *training* is indispensable, and the securing of a thorough training involves *time* which people engrossed in art or literature or kindred pre-occupations can ill afford to spare. If training is essential, *knowledge* of problems and public affairs is a thousand times more so. Then again, there are people who temperamentally find it in the line of the least resistance to write verse, but would at once suffer a complete mental collapse, if asked to mount a political platform or offer mediation in a political emergency.

But does Sir Rabindra Nath mean that the education of the masses is not necessary? If it is according to him necessary, then how can it be secured without keen *political* agitation based on an intelligent dispassionate study of facts? Or does the poet-laureate of Asia mean that the judicial machinery as it exists in India to-day stands in no

need of overhauling and police methods in no need of revision ?

And yet it is the merest platitude that no far-reaching changes in the administration of justice or in methods of government have ever been brought about except under the pressure of an intelligent and organised political demand. Surely, it must have occurred to Tagore that there are vital *political* problems in India, which it were sheer cowardice and mental perversity to ignore or minimise. Why, the moment one begins to study such humdrum though harassing questions as Indian famines and appalling mortality by the plague, in one's endeavour to trace the root causes and suggest remedies, one is at once brought face to face with the quasi-political aspects of these oft-repeated phenomena.

“ Our real problem in India is not political.” Does Sir Rabindra suggest that there is a political problem in India which it is *not desirable* to bestow attention on, or does he mean that India has not emerged on the political stage at all ? If the latter, it is but a curious irony of fate that has sent Mr. Montagu to India, as a plenipotentiary of the British Cabinet, or announced to the world India's consuming passion for political independence.

Surely Sir Rabindra Nath knew that Mrs. Besant was interned some time ago, by Lord Pentland's government on a *political* issue, *viz.*, the promotion of Home Rule for India. And Tagore, who preaches that “ our real problem in India is not political ” sent a most pathetic message of sympathy to her in these words : “ Convey my heart-felt sympathy for



Mrs. Besant, and tell her that her martyrdom for suffering humanity will do more good than any crumbs that might be thrown at us to silence our clamour."

There is nothing sacrosanct about politics any more than there is anything inherently depraved about them. Politics are simply public activities directed at the furtherance of national interests in obedience to the obligations of the State. We quite agree with Tagore that "gigantic organisations for hurting others, and warding off their blows, for making money by dragging others back, will not help us. On the contrary, by their crushing weight, their enormous cost and their deadening effect upon living humanity, they will seriously impede our freedom in the larger life of a higher civilisation" ("Nationalism," p. 101).

It is pretty obvious that Sir Rabindra Nath starts by reading some sinister meaning into politics and then proceeds to demolish the man-of-straw that he sets up. In all probability he confines politics to "a political and economic union for purposes of defence and aggression" as also to activities calculated to promote "Commercialism with its barbarity of ugly decorations . . . a terrible menace to all humanity because setting up the ideal of power over perfection" (p. 129: *Ibid*). But commercialism and aggression are not politics, and there is happily an increasing number of politicians who are fully alive to the dangers of organised national selfishness, who are fighting for the rights and liberties of countries other than their own, who

seldom tire of fighting for wider opportunities for the oppressed and down-trodden and who are thus slowly improving on political ideals. Besides, if there are evils rampant in politics-ridden countries, who will venture to assert that countries where politics have been stagnant or absent altogether are models of perfection ?

At the same time we should venture to point out that there are political organisations in this country, as in other European countries, whose one supreme objective is to try and mitigate the very same horrors that have sent cold shudders into Sir Rabindra Nath's being, and to combat the evil tendencies that " seriously impede our freedom in the larger life of a higher civilisation." And we shall have to admit that there is greater weight attaching to *well-considered and concerted* action of organisations than the nebulous though sublime day-dreams of isolated individuals. For the only effective way of bringing about the overthrow of a *bad* organisation is by setting up a good organisation having noble aims and employing honourable methods. All right-thinking men must, of course, admit that there are sordid motives and squalid behaviour in much of the " party politics " propaganda of to-day, but all political activity does not resolve itself into party bias, and in spite of it all, he will be a bold man indeed who will dogmatically assert that no good has come out of it, in democratic countries, even out of the tension and conflict of opposing factions.

This attitude towards politics would be quite understandable in one that was opposed to the inter-

change of ideals between East and West. But Tagore says emphatically : “ I am not for thrusting off Western civilisation and becoming segregated in our independence. Let us have a deep association. If providence wants England to be the channel of that communication, of that deeper association, I am willing to accept it with all humility. I have great faith in human nature, and I think the West will find its true mission ” (*Ibid.* p. 109). How is it possible then, that with the constant interchange of ideas and the spread of western education, India must eternally refrain from western institutions, say those of representative and responsible government ? And that on the specious assumption that our venerable ancestors will turn in their graves, when they get to know that their progeny have actually taken to democratic ways. Is it not much more preferable to accept the best ideals that have moulded British institutions than simply to bow down before the physical force of pax Britannica ?

We do not know whether Sir Rabindra Nath is confusing *sectarianism* with nationalism “ which for years has been at the bottom of India's troubles.” The root-causes of India's repeated misfortunes have been sectarian antagonisms and religious bigotries and racial insularities. If we could have evolved a strong, unified and consolidated national consciousness, Indian history would be quite different to-day. If, however, Sir Rabindra Nath is referring to the recent unrest in that section of India that is politically self-conscious and articulate, we have only to remind him that national consciousness is richer in content



than provincial jealousies and communal feuds, however deplorable the anomalies attending on a period of transition, and however inferior in quality be national feeling to that sense of international harmony towards which all Indian nationalists of the sane type are impatiently aspiring.

It is only as a nation that India can take her place in the counsels of the nations. It is all very well to talk of International Brotherhood, but we cannot dispense with the preliminary stage of nation-building, and no free nation would admit us to her brotherhood unless we go there as the accredited representatives of "India: a Nation." The task that faces Indian nationalists to-day is stupendous, and the courage with which they face difficulties of vast magnitude that beset the path of nation-building, should call forth our admiration instead of provoking our amusement.

Besides, commercial enterprises and vast organisations for the exploitation of weaker races and poorer individuals do not exhaust the contents of nationality. A nation has a vast heritage of ideals, dreams and aspirations bequeathed from the past and waiting to be developed for the future, and only as members of a nation can we appraise our own traditions or rightly value the acquisitions of other races. Besides, there are internal problems awaiting solution at the hands of any one nation. We have heard of broad-minded Englishmen and sympathetic Frenchmen, but we have not yet come upon one that was a representative of all the nations.

But Tagore is on much weaker ground when he

expounds his views on nationalism. "Nationalism is a great menace," he begins. "It is the particular thing which for years has been at the bottom of India's troubles. And inasmuch as we have been ruled and dominated by a nation that is strictly political in its attitude, we have tried to develop within ourselves, despite our inheritance from the past, a belief in our eventual political destiny." (*Ibid.* pp. 111, 112). And yet, curiously enough, Tagore completely stultifies himself by the astounding declaration that "India has never had a real sense of nationalism. Even though from childhood I had been taught that idolatry of the nation is almost better than reverence for God and humanity, I believe I have outgrown that teaching, and it is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their India by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity. The educated Indian at present is trying to absorb some lessons from history contrary to the lessons of our ancestors."

Before we proceed to unravel the amazing inconsistencies that are sown thick in these otherwise beautiful and touching passages, we should like to give in Tagore's own words, his definition of a nation. "It is the aspect of a whole people organised for power" (p. 110).

We do not accept the definition, for it is the most tortuous and one-sided that could possibly catch the eye. Yet we should like to analyse his own statements in the light of his definition. A moment ago, we quoted Tagore's dictum that nationalism

“ which for years has been at the bottom of India’s troubles ” is a great menace. But has any student of Indian history—even of recent Indian history—ever heard of the whole Indian people “ organised for power ? ” There is nothing more conspicuous among, at any rate, the illiterate masses of humanity inhabiting the various parts of India, than their seeming heterogeneity and disparity from other communities. If the whole of India were “ organised for power ” British ascendancy there would have been rather difficult to establish.

But Sir Rabindra Nath takes our breath away when he tells us, in a half-humorous manner that “ In the beginning of the history of political agitation in India . . . there *was* a party known as the Indian Congress ; it had no real programme. They had a few grievances for redress by the authorities.” And yet Reuter tells us that Tagore shared with Mrs. Besant, the president-elect of the Indian National Congress (which according to Sir Rabindra Nath *was* and is presumably, no longer in existence), and Mr. Surendra Nath Bannerjea the honours of the national assembly that had met to demand Home Rule within the Empire. And what is more interesting is that Tagore specially composed a beautiful ode for the occasion. And yet he coolly tells us that “ there *was* a party known as the Indian Congress ” ( *Ibid.* p. 112 ).

After rehearsing beautiful sentiments that spring out of a noble but untempered idealism, Sir Rabindra Nath proceeds : “ So much for the social and political regeneration of India. Now we come to her



industries, and I am very often asked whether there is in India any industrial regeneration since the advent of the British Government. It must be remembered that at the beginning of British rule in India, our industries were suppressed, and since then we have not met with any real help or encouragement to enable us to make a stand against the monster commercial organisations of the world. *The nations have decreed that we must remain purely an agricultural people* " (p. 126).

So far, so good. But instead of making any constructive proposals for the future Sir Rabindra Nath again plunges into exalted rhetoric. " I personally do not believe in the unwieldy organisations of the present day . . . . Beauty is the signature which the Creator stamps upon his works."

From another book called " Personality " (Messrs. Macmillan and Co.) we gather that Tagore has developed some views concerning the rights and functions of womanhood. It must be a profound instinct that led him to make the following weighty statement : " At the present stage of history, civilisation is almost exclusively masculine, a civilisation of power in which the woman has been thrust in the shade. Therefore it has lost its balance, and it is moving by hopping from war to war. Its motive forces are the forces of destruction, and its ceremonies are carried through by an appalling number of human sacrifices. This one-sided civilisation is crashing along a series of catastrophes at a tremendous speed because of its one-sidedness." (" Personality," p. 172). We do not know what Miss Christabel Pankhurst would

think of the above declaration, but it contains, in a nut-shell, the secret of the failure of a man-made civilisation. I believe, all sane-minded suffragists would hail the statement as a precise and powerful argument for *active co-operation* between the sexes. Yet, they will soon be disappointed, if they felt elated over Tagore's conversion to the cause of women's suffrage, for he seems to be out of touch with the mighty forces that are impelling the women's movement, with active, progressive, constructive feminism.

If the one-sided civilisation has failed, how else could it be made complete and harmonious except by organised women capturing the control now denied them over the affairs of the State, and sharing it with men ? But Tagore continues : " Woman's function is the *passive* function of the soil, which not only helps the tree to grow, but keeps its growth within limits. . . . Woman is endowed with the *passive* qualities of chastity, modesty, devotion and power of self-sacrifice in a greater measure than man is " (*Ibid.* p. 172-73). Tagore is quite broad-minded enough to concede that " the human world is the woman's world " and yet he would say—to a very large extent, quite rightly—that " This domestic world has been the gift of God to woman." We will only add—and to man also.

In the meanwhile we are grateful for the prophecy " And in the future civilisation also, the women, the feebler creatures . . . they will have their place, and those bigger creatures will have to give way " (" Personality, " page 184).

## II

### RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY

(1772-1833)

IF one were asked to point to the Indian through whose courageous efforts a golden bridge was first erected uniting the progressive, practical traditions of the West with the sublime idealism of the East, I should point to Ram Mohan Roy. And if one were again asked to single out the great man, through whose personal endeavour and great self-sacrifice, abuses and corrupt practices that had gathered as accretions round the once pure and healthy body of Hindu doctrine received, if not a violent check, at least, scathing condemnation, I should point to Ram Mohan Roy. And if one were asked, whose was the bold and prophetic vision, that enabled him to see beyond India's political downfall and the passing away of the sceptre from her, beyond the surrender of her independence and the humiliation of her lot, to the future vistas radiant with the dawn of hope, when through Western culture, and democratic discipline the Mother of Nations would again step out to take an honourable place in the comity of nations, I should point to Ram



Mohan Roy. And finally : If one were asked to indicate the master-mind who saw that India's progress was to be conditioned not by contemplation alone, but by action ; not by pessimism, but by invincible hope ; not by self-suppression, but by self-realisation ; not by isolation from the life of the West, but by healthy competition or co-operation with it, enlisting in the cause of national development forces that truly modernise life, wresting the mysteries of science, capturing the treasures of Western knowledge, and applying these researches for the enrichment of India, I should again point to Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

Ram Mohan was, indeed, a man of capacious powers of mind, broad religious sympathies, and a very powerful though genial personality. His range of interests was as wide as the sphere of his activities. He never destroyed for the sheer fiendish delight of destroying. He pulled down, so that he might raise a new building, on the ruins of the old, after clearing away the *débris*.

Our hero figures throughout his long and arduous campaign against ignorance, helplessness and oppression, not only as the champion of men, but also of *women*. He is the first Indian who raised his powerful voice against the iniquitous treatment of women. He has done for women in India, what John Stuart Mill did for the women of England in another direction. The socially enfranchised—and one earnestly hopes that also the politically enfranchised women of the future would think well of him, who generations before, strove to improve their status,

and sought to penalise the indignities and horrors that they suffered, even under the British *régime*.

Before we proceed to fuller details and personal incidents, we should like to suggest that the Raja's title to celebrity can be established only through his founding the Brahma Samāj in 1828. But his efforts were not, by any means, confined to religion. He just as strenuously promoted the best interests of the community by stimulating interest in education, giving generous donations, and helping those who were pioneers in this respect. He was perfectly in his element, when pouring hot indignation over the practice of suttee as when pleading for political reform or advocating the cause of the King of Oudh.

Beyond dispute, the hero of the present sketch stands head and shoulders above his contemporaries and even many of his successors, as the premier nation-builder of India. His great towering personality stands in solitary, majestic outline, dwarfing by its contrast, even greater men of a later day. For in passing judgments on the achievements of the Raja we must remember the obstacles he had to encounter; the organised forces of conservatism and decadence against which he had to stand up and fight, and the difficult times during which he flourished. And never did man fight more valiantly, or was more obedient to the heavenly vision.

Ram Mohan came of a highly respectable and deeply religious parentage, his father being for long connected with the Muhammadan Government in Bengal. He had thus sprung from very high-caste and orthodox Brahmins, known as Kulins. His

father was a follower of the Vishnuite leader, Chaitanya, who early in the sixteenth century, infused emotional warmth and fervour into Hindu worship and devotion, which was till then either ceremonial or else severely intellectual. His mother came of a *Shākta* family. The Shaktas are a Hindu sect, who worship goddesses as the energy of the Supreme Being. Lakshmi is thus the energy of Vishnu ; Uma the energy of Shiva.

While our hero was only twelve years old, he was married by his parents, but his girl-wife soon died.

He was married, later, to two girls, and was accordingly a polygamist till 1824. These little incidents should not be misconstrued as detracting from Ram Mohan's greatness ; in the first place, he was not responsible for marrying the two wives, he only had to submit to the mandates of the father ; secondly not having attained to years of discretion, he could not have been expected to judge whether the parents' decision was faulty and reprehensible or good. Lastly, his views and convictions which really made him great subsequently had not yet formed and taken shape. He was till then only a creature of circumstances ; not yet the creator of a new environment for Hinduism and—India.

About the year 1784, he was sent, for instruction, to the Muhammadan seat of learning in Patna, where he continued as pupil till 1787. While he pursued his studies there, he was greatly attracted by the teachings of Moslem Sufis (*i.e.*, mystics) who had broken away from the rigid orthodoxy of the Schools. These Sufi doctrines suggested affinities with the teachings



of Vedanta and held his mind under their spell. They became formulative influences in his life. The Sufis, in common with Vedantists, set forth the ultimate goal of the religious endeavour to be absorption into the Divine, and full initiation into the last stage of revelation is attained after preliminary grounding and probation in the stages called "The Way," "The Truth," etc. Intuition was recognised as the best vehicle for the apprehension of reality, by the Sufis. It is also more than probable that Ram Mohan came into touch, while at School, with the Mua'tazallite philosophers, who taught that Reason was a sure and unfailing guide to the facts of life; that belief in the resurrection of the body was untenable and that sensitiveness to the great moral issues of life was the inner core of religion. This school of thought exercised great influence during the eighth century A.D., in Baghdad and elsewhere, during a period, when through its numerous conquests in the East and the West, Islam came into touch with Greek civilisation and Christian ideals, and enriched—and was in its turn replenished by—non-Islamic cultures and traditions.

When Ram Mohan returned home, the rationalistic teachings his mind was steeped in, encouraged him to a revolt against idol-worship. His parents offered ingenious explanations, justifying the worship of images as mere symbols of the divine. But Ram Mohan had finally made up his mind to renounce idolatry, once and for all. Miss Collet tells us an amusing story of how Ram Mohan Roy was once prevailed upon by his mother to do homage to the

idols for her sake. When he could no longer resist the repeated requests, he went and did the required homage, all the time being as pessimistic and sceptical as ever concerning the utility of the act. He went through great persecution at home and while very young was asked not to darken his father's doorstep again. For several years he went about as a wandering ascetic, in search of truth and desirous of meeting great men who might give him fuller knowledge concerning the things that disturbed his soul. It is even suggested that he held, in the course of these wanderings, prolonged discussions with the Lamas of Tibet. But we possess no convincing evidence in support of this statement. After some time, however, his father pardoned him and allowed him to return, when he settled in Benares, and began the study of Sanscrit and Hindu scriptures, but did not commence the study of English till 1796. After the death of his father in 1803, Ram Mohan was most virulently attacked and persecuted by his mother, who wanted, by launching law-suits, to deprive him of his share in the ancestral property and even of his acquired means. But in this attempt she was completely defeated. She wanted to urge the plea that Ram Mohan's persistent refusal to conform to Hindu ceremony and rites was proof positive that he was beyond the pale of Hinduism. In 1804, when settled in Murshidabad, he brought out a book in Persian called "Tuhfatul Muwah-hiddin" or "A Gift, to those who believe in the unity of the Godhead." His rationalistic utterances may have given offence to not a few, but

these certainly mark a definite advance on irrational theory and pre-supposition expressed both by orthodox, unreformed Hinduism and the dogma-ridden Christianity of the missionary pathfinders like Carey, Marshman and Ward. We cast no reflection on the work that was splendidly done under difficult conditions by these really great men, who not only preached the gospel, but translated the Bible, started the first printing press in India, and helped in raising the depressed classes. But their theology was as crude and as hopelessly Calvinistic as their intentions were benevolent, and through theological narrow-mindedness they defeated the very object, for the promotion of which they had so heroically consecrated their lives.

Some eighty-seven years ago, a wise man from the East could be seen treading the streets of London with measured gait and dignified mien or driving through provincial towns, in the company of friends and admirers, amidst the curious gazes of interested on-lookers. One wonders if the lookers-on could have even a faint glimmering of an idea whether the venerable-looking oriental was visiting London, in 1830, on a holiday trip or on a mission the importance of which might disturb the equanimity of a man not so great as he. The Eastern visitor that we are referring to was no other than Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Ram Mohan was given a very warm reception in London by a host of friends, and his lectures on liberal religion were listened to with great interest. He made numerous friends, and the cordiality shown him produced a deep impression on



his mind and forged new ties of affection for England.

It might sound incredible, but it is true, nevertheless, that but for a crucial and heart-rending experience which Ram Mohan went through in 1811, about nineteen years previous to his visit to the metropolis of the Empire, this visit would not have materialised at all. Nor could the cruel memories of that tragic experience be ever blotted out of his mind. It is true that he came on an important political mission that time, viz., to present the petition entrusted to him by the King of Oudh, to lay Indian grievances before the sympathetic public, and to suggest measures the adoption of which would conduce to the material and moral development of India. It was also true that he came to London as an Indian ambassador from the court of the Moghul Emperor. That he achieved unqualified success in his pleading for the Emperor might be seen from the grant to him, on the completion of negotiations, of a settled perpetuity. The Anglo-Indian authorities could not see their way to recognise his status as ambassador, since the King of Oudh was only king in name, political power and control having passed into the hands of the East India Company. The Indian authorities further began to under-rate the value of his mission, by suggesting that the increase of the pension was already recommended, and was simply a matter of time.

But the Raja was an ambassador in a still nobler cause. It was mainly through his efforts and co-operation that Lord William Bentinck, Governor-

General of India, was encouraged to abolish the practice of the self-immolation of Indian widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands. And now we might relate the incident that we have already referred to ; the incident that, more than anything else, determined Ram Mohan's visit to England.

On his brother's death, the widow decided to commit suttee. But when the flames actually touched her she wanted to save her life. The priests and orthodox relatives, however, forced her down with bamboo poles, and drums and horns sounded louder and louder to drown her agonising shrieks. This blood-curdling sight enlisted Ram Mohan's sympathy in a crusade against suttee. The cruel custom was made illegal in December, 1828, much to Ram Mohan's relief, even though, to soften the acrimony of the orthodox opponents, he made a pretence of pleading for a less drastic measure.

On the abolition of suttee, a campaign was set on foot by the conservative section of Hindus demanding the abrogation of the new measure, since the new legislation amounted, according to them, to interference with religious custom and was a violation of the policy of religious neutrality. But Lord William was fortunately quite firm. Ram Mohan had already made ample quotations from the Shastras to show that suttee was voluntary and only secondary in importance to life-long chastity. A monster petition was, accordingly, addressed to the House of Commons by the conservative Hindus, and Ram Mohan was anxious lest the reactionaries should achieve their object and renew the nefarious

custom that was a bar-sinister across India's shield.

Shortly before his visit to England, Ram Mohan Roy founded the Brahma Samāj in Calcutta. A building was erected, we understand, by Ram Mohan himself, in Chitpore Road, Calcutta, and opened on the 23rd of January "To be used—" so the wording of the Trust Deed runs—" . . . as a place of public meeting of all sorts and descriptions of people without distinction, as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly, sober, religious and devout manner for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the author and preserver of the Universe, but not under or by any other name, designation or title peculiarly used for and applied to any particular Being or Beings, or by any man or set of men whatsoever, and that no *graven image* (italics are mine) statue or sculpture, carving, painting, picture, portrait or the likeness of anything shall be admitted within the said building. . . . and that no *sacrifice shall ever be permitted therein* (italics are throughout ours) and that no animal or living creature shall within or on the said premises be deprived of life . . . and that in conducting the said worship and adoration no object animate or inanimate that has been or is . . . recognised as an object of worship by any man or set of men *shall be reviled or slightly or contemptuously spoken of* . . . and that no sermon-preaching, discourse, prayer or hymn be delivered, made or used in such worship but such as have a tendency to the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the Universe to the promotion of



charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue and the strengthening of the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds."

These words mark only the first beginnings of religious liberalism, characterised by the abolition of idolatry, animal sacrifice and even the use of "carving, painting, picture, portrait." We have as yet no systematic theology of the newer order, no organisation or definite conditions of membership. The pervasive line of thought is deistic, tinged with a spirit of toleration, and keen moral perception. But even so, it constitutes a fair advance on what had gone before. Prince Dwarka Nath Tagore was his chief supporter during these initial stages. We shall see that whereas the break with idolatry is complete, priesthood still occupies a prominent position. The chanting of selections from the Upanishads was done by Brahmins in a room screened off from the rest and here only Brahmins were admitted. We might here incidentally refer to the strong grip of conservatism even on a bold and progressive mind like Ram Mohan's. During his visit to England he brought two Hindu servants with him, in order that his caste might remain inviolate, even though in India he combated both caste, idolatry and suttee. Then in India, though he freely dined with Muhammadans and Europeans, he would scrupulously use separate tables in the same room. The main thing behind these habits was, no doubt, the honest belief that open and complete break with orthodox usage might lead to complete social ostracism, and in case he lost his standing as a Hindu, his reforming

propaganda might be crippled through restricted opportunity.

Though he never became a Christian, he loyally supported the Christian missionaries in their educational efforts. He even went so far as to secure rooms where Dr. Duff might start a school, and got him some pupils. Further, he gave assistance to the missionaries in translating the scriptures into Bengali, though his interpretation of the original texts caused violent disagreements between him and them. One of them, Mr. Adam by name, was won over to Ram Mohan's side. Bishop Middleton once wounded his feelings without meaning it, of course, —by suggesting that only if he became a Christian, he would have the prestige of the Imperial race behind him, and that "he would be respected in life and honoured in death." Ram Mohan never spoke to the Bishop again, for it caused him mortal offence to realise that he should be asked to become a Christian, except for the highest of motives and without any ulterior aim.

His thoroughness in research may be gauged by his endeavour to study Greek, Hebrew, Arabic and Sanskrit, in order that he might thus be enabled to understand and interpret the teachings embodied in the original versions of the scriptures of the Christians, Muhammadans and Hindus. He was greatly attracted by the ethical value of Christ's teachings, and wrote a pamphlet called "The Principles of Jesus: the Guide to Peace and Happiness." At the conclusion of his researches, he said :

“ The consequence of my long and uninterrupted researches into religious truth has been that I have found the doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles, and better adapted for the use of rational beings, than any other which have come to my knowledge.” In the preface to “ The Principles of Jesus ” he says :

“ This simple code of religion and morality is so admirably calculated to elevate men’s ideas to high and liberal notions of one God . . . and is also well-fitted to regulate the conduct of the human race in the discharge of their various duties to God, to themselves and to society, that I cannot but hope the best effects from its promulgation in the present form.”

He never returned to India from his English visit. His last remains were laid to rest in a quiet cemetery in Bristol, where a few friends gathered to show honour to one whose greatness was unique.

Curiously enough, in spite of his attempts to resist the complete Westernisation of Indian religions and society, his vision of the India of the future was that of a Christian India, industrialised, socially emancipated and self-governing. Perhaps he felt that the tide of Western influence would carry everything before it. Some of his efforts are bearing fruit, but the vision of a Christianised India seems yet to be a long way off from realisation.



### III

## KESHAB CHANDRA SEN

(1838-1884)

“ India will attain true greatness and civilisation if only the basis on which we build this vast fabric is national and firm. . . . In fact nothing but fearless and disinterested patriotism, regulated and sustained by keen sense of duty will save Indian society from the evils under which it is groaning, or guard it against new evils. Every man who has paid any attention to the social condition of India must admit that it is impossible to ensure the real welfare of the country unless and until caste is wholly eradicated, for it is this that prevents the realisation of the spirit of true Brotherhood.”—

KESHAB CHANDRA SEN.

“ Oh ! may that blessed day soon come when the earth, untrod by sect, or creed, or clan, shall own the two great principles—the universal fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.”—*Ibid.*

AFTER the death of Raja Rama Mohan Roy in Bristol in 1833, the Brahma Samāj was indeed in a precarious position, and but for the munificent generosity of Prince Dwarka Nath Tagore—Sir Rabindra Nath’s grandfather—would have died a natural death. But even more valuable than the financial assistance given by Dwarka Nath Tagore and Rama Mohana’s other colleagues and supporters, was the perfervid devotion and saintliness of Mahanshi Debendra Nath Tagore (1817-1905). But a young man of nineteen was soon to appear on the

scene, destined to eclipse the achievements of the Founder of the Samaj and even those of the saintly patriarch, Debendra Nath. We refer to Keshab Chandra Sen, who soon after admission to the Samaj took both the leaders and the rank and file by storm, by virtue of his great abilities, his moving eloquence and profound spirituality.

Sen had received an excellent education along modern lines in Calcutta and came of a Vishnuite family of Vaidya caste. He had great personal attractiveness, and had the rare gift of compelling the loyalty of friends and the admiration of opponents. The charm of his manners combined with his personality and a commanding, highly intelligent expression gave him a unique place in the Samāj.

Till 1859 we find him attending public meetings of the Brahma Samāj and taking part in the discussions. But it was in 1861, that being convinced that there was ample scope for whole-hearted devotion to the cause, he resigned a lucrative situation he held in the Bank of Bengal and induced his friends to make similar sacrifices, in order that they, like him, might concentrate on the work waiting for them. Before taking this decisive step, however, Keshab had founded, the year before, the Sangat Sabha or "An Association for Religious Fellowship." In connection with this association, weekly meetings for devotional exercises were held, and the customs and ceremonials of Hinduism were freely and frankly discussed. Thus the members seriously considered how far it would be consistent with the progressive

ideals of the Brahma Samāj to incorporate in its worship idolatrous sacraments observed by the orthodox, unreformed Hinduism. It is a matter of common knowledge that at the time of birth, marriage or death certain rituals are practised, which have an idolatrous and superstitious basis. It was decided that these should be repudiated by the Samāj unconditionally. The Brahmins, whether priests or otherwise were enjoined to discard the sacred thread, worn by the twice-born. Further, priestly offices were thrown open to non-Brahmins for the first time. The right of reading the Vedas and the Upanishads was conceded to every Brahma ; caste was denounced as an unworthy and degrading restriction ; inter-caste marriages were definitely encouraged ; widow-remarriages became an important plank in the progressive propaganda, and the older leaders took alarm lest the vigorous advocacy of social reform might undermine the foundations of the Hindu religion. Durga-pūja and Kālī-pūja were given up, and the chamber in the Tagore residence where the idol stood, soon became a room where people met for prayer and spiritual exercises.

But the conservatism of the older leaders was a formidable barrier to sound and substantial progress. It was Debendra Nath Tagore who was, so far, really a pillar of the infant church, who opposed strenuous resistance to suggestions in the direction of widow-remarriage, renunciation of caste and the initiation of non-Brahmins to priestly functions. Though by nature liberal-minded, he was averse to drastic reform, and would hesitate at each point



before accepting anything that threatened a break with the Hindu continuity. Besides, he felt that the time for sweeping reforms was not yet. What the Samāj needed, according to him, was quiescence of spirit, but not social reform.

Shortly before, the Maharishi (literally "great seer or sage") had passed through a critical experience that left a profound impression on him and made him, more and more, other-worldly and austere in his habits. He would fall back on communion with the Infinite mind as a most delightful exercise, and compared to the beatific vision that contemplation conjured up for him, every other activity would pale into insignificance. He was thus spiritually in direct lineal descent from the famous ascetics of the Vedānta, whose supreme joy has been the recognition of the soul's identity with Brahma, who have felt that this could be achieved only through meditation and giving up temporal entanglements, and whose absorption in God has left comparatively little room for other activities.

The consequence was that the moment Keshab Chandra Sen was appointed minister of the Samāj—somewhere between 1861 and 1862—Tagore was convinced that this meant unwarranted violation of Brahmanic rights and Ishvara Chandravidyāsagar, the stout protagonist of Hindu widows, and he at once severed their connection with the Samāj, and established a short-lived society called the Upasana Samāj.

Keshab had come under strong Christian influences, and had a vivid sense of sin and the need for moral

regeneration. The person and character of Christ held him in complete thrall, and he felt that without developing the ethical side of religion mere contemplative exercise and a quietistic fatalism would lead to nowhere. He strove to press on the minds of his adherents the urgent claims of philanthropic service and social co-operation, without which religion would degenerate into formalism and be barren of permanent results. No doubt, his mind must have been steeped in these practical ideas during his school and college days, as a direct result of coming into contact with European literature and history : but we see no reason why he should not be given credit for initiative in these matters, or for possessing the genius for practical things, since it is grossly misleading to assert that in India, only contemplation is in vogue and practical activities are under a ban. Nothing can be remoter from the truth. All that we are justified in saying is that certain duties and functions have been allocated to certain classes or castes ; and that even *stages* have been specified during which certain activities should either be given full sway or completely suspended.

In 1865 we notice that these differences between the mentality of Keshab and Debendra came to a head ; all the property of the Samāj was left in control of the latter ; while Keshab would have none of the recrudescence of what he would consider reactionary and nefarious rituals, and withdrew with all his influential and progressive following. This split depressed Keshab, since he greatly revered Tagore, who was, in turn, attached to him.

Thus the schism grew and permanently divided the Samaj between the Adi Brahma Samaj (*i.e.*, original) and the Sadharana section (*i.e.*, universal). The attitude of the former section towards caste and other Hindu ceremonies is uncertain, much being left to the private judgment and discretion of individual believers, the avowed object of maintaining this neutrality being to get greater support from the orthodox masses and preserve intact the Hindu sanctions behind social phenomena. At the time this controversy arose there were fifty Samajes in Bengal, four in North India and one in Madras.

Keshab, soon after, travelled as far as Bombay and Madras and preached his views, the result being that the Vedic Samāj was established in Madras which years later assumed the name of the Madras Brahma Samāj, and the Society founded in Bombay developed in 1867, into the Prarthana Samāj of Bombay, under the distinguished leadership of such champions of liberal religion as the late Mr. Justice Ranade, Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, Sir R. G. Bhandarkar and others. But the Prarthana Samāj is really the seal of Keshab's apostolate, for he it was who drew the attention of thoughtful men to the great need for liberalising religion and for infusing new fervour and reforming zeal into the minds of those accustomed to caste-ridden, dogma-ridden and priest-ridden Hinduism. But Keshab also realised the need of a permanent organisation built round the nucleus of his main ideas.

Keshab's spiritual life derived the mainsprings of



its enthusiasm from his unbounded fascination for the person and character of Christ, and from his deep conviction that all religious development must lead to ethical discipline and the cultivation of a high standard of character. He also realised the need for developing a communal consciousness instead of a mere individualistic pursuit of religious ends, apart from the recognition of the obligations of the commonweal. His religious culture was mainly built up through his constant study of the Bible—a duty which he would always enjoin on fellow-worshippers—and his familiarity with books like Seeley's "Ecce Homo," Liddon's "Divinity of our Lord," "Theologica Germanica," the numerous publications of the Christian Literature Society, and exposition of Christian doctrine by his professors while at College, assisted no doubt by his religious genius and the sympathetic attitude towards Christianity bequeathed by the magnanimous leaders that had gone before.

But it is inaccurate and misleading to say that Keshab had, without any exercise of the critical faculty, accepted the doctrinal position as expounded by the missionary pathfinders, of the stamp of Duff, Carey, Marshman and Ward. The Christian position formulated by these noble pioneers was crude, extremely bigoted, and hence chary of any sensible compromise. It is true that Dr. Duff was astonished at Tagore's belief in the infallibility of the Vedas as forming the coping-stone of the Adi Brahma Samāj, but it scarcely occurred to him that equally astonishing to the exponents of progressive religion

must have been his own (Dr. Duff's) unquestioning faith in the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible, the Genesis story of the Fall, and kindred fossilised teachings current in those days in reference to eternal punishment, salvation through subscription to certain dogmas and the like. But we have to remember that in those days higher criticism had not begun its work and the science of comparative religion had not gathered up the fruits of its elaborate researches.

From the missionary point of view it is a matter for extreme regret that the pioneers of the Christian faith did not then carry to India an evangel, shorn of its grosser elements of orthodoxy and error, for the period in which Keshab developed and propagated his views was the psychological moment when sensitiveness to Christian influence was at its maximal intensity. The missionaries could not then realise that in India there was no religious vacuum so far as tradition was concerned and the people had a religious past to which they would tenaciously cling. But from the Hindu point of view, the assimilation of the wholesome teachings of Christianity and of its practical and optimistic outlook, coupled with the rejection of what seemed to them its extravagant claims and narrow views, has resulted in a synthesis of ideals that have enriched each other, without destroying the foundations of either faith. This was only to be expected in a country like India with its immemorial religious culture and numerous schools of philosophy.

Keshab Chandra Sen, just as his religious genius

was at its highest point of fruition, came under the influence of Rama Krishna Paramahansa, who believed that idols are merely symbols employed to visualise God, and that therefore idolatry is defensible, that all religions are true, that every one should keep to his own faith and that the whole of Hinduism—every element of it—must be jealously preserved.

Owing to his severe penances and passion for God, his great adoration of Mother Kāli, and his tolerance of all religions, Rama Krishna had earned a great reputation for himself. Keshab was simply magnetised by him, and would go to him frequently for exchange of views. Rama Krishna was a brilliant conversationalist and had crystallised his views in short epigrammatic sayings. He had completely conquered the sex instinct, the caste-instinct and the desire for possessions. Needless to say, these frequent interviews somewhat modified Keshab's reforming zeal ; the Hindu ceremony of Arati or waving of censers was introduced in the Brahma ritual, just as baptism and the Lord's supper were already adopted. A simpler mode of life was adopted by Keshab and his friends, much to the decline of the combative attitude towards orthodoxy.

In 1869, when a new building was just declared open for Brahma worship, Keshab Chandra decided to take a short trip to England. There was lack of organisation in the Samāj ; hardly any constitution or democratic government, everything was in Keshab's hands, so the members felt that this would be a serious inconvenience, and might even compromise the security of the new Society. But Keshab's



temporary absence during this critical stage turned out to be a blessing in disguise, for not only did his powerful oratory and spiritual earnestness draw round him notable men and women in England, but it revealed to them what was most progressive in the Indian tradition. He interpreted the heart of India to appreciative audiences, in words that breathed and thoughts that burned. Besides, his eloquence and catholicity of mind enlisted the sympathies of advanced thinkers in religious movements in India. But his study of the home life in England, and of the general social conditions prevailing there, opened his eyes to the need for much constructive work on his return to his own country. His new ideas took visible shape in the Normal School for Girls, an Industrial School for Boys, an Institute for the education of women and the Bharata Asrama which he established for the instruction of women and children and for fostering larger ideals of home life. This, by the way, is a distinct advance on his previous views, since he was originally opposed to the education and social enfranchisement of women, and felt that the younger men in the camp were ardent radicals and scarcely realised the danger of conceding much freedom to women.

Ever since his assumption of leadership Keshab rendered valuable services to the Samāj in compiling a liturgy for devotional purposes, enriching its ritual and introducing modes of worship congenial to the temperament and the general environment of the people. Among these may be mentioned Sankirtana or chanting of hymns to the accompaniment

of musical instruments, and Nagarkirtana or procession of singers, shouting and dancing and singing hymns and songs of praise, while marching through public thoroughfares. The keen enthusiasm of Bhakti, *i.e.*, devotion to God and implicit trust in Him, he had no doubt inherited from his Vishnuite ancestry, who were followers of Chaitanya, the great Bhakti revivalist of the sixteenth century.

It seems highly probable that the development of Unitarianism in England has had some share in facilitating the Indian transition to a pure form of monotheism. This seems to be almost entirely ignored by modern European writers on Indian religious developments. The present writer has found such books as Dr. Martineau's "Seat of Authority in Religion," "Principle of Ethics," "Quiet Half-hours with Jesus," along with Stopford Brooke's publications and Charles Voysey's voluminous sermons, in the private libraries of Brahma Samajists. Besides, some remarkable books on ethics and metaphysics, included in the University curriculum are by prominent representatives of the Unitarian revolt against the traditional formulæ of the Reformed Church. Without doubt, these have influenced the minds of university educated men, and given them somewhat of their bias.

But over and above these vague generalisations, we know it for a fact that the Brahma leaders in India like Partap Chandra Mazumdar, Siva Nath Shastri, including Keshab Chandra Sen himself, were in constant touch through correspondence and study of their literature, with Professor Max Müller, of Oxford,

and notably with Unitarian leaders like Charles Voysey, Edward Carpenter, William Ellery Channing of America, and the late Dr. Stopford Brooke of London. In fact Charles Voysey, whose violent and at times irresponsible, polemic against Christianity made him notorious and cost him his incumbency, used to warn Keshab Chandra Sen that he was shivering on the perilous brink of Christian decision, and Professor Max Müller would tell P. C. Mozoomdar that he had better continue as an enlightened, fully-emancipated Hindu rather than formally seek initiation into the Christian Church.

We thus see that the cross-currents of modern thought had mingled their waters with the stream of eclectic tendencies that produced the Samāj on Hindu foundations. During an epoch, when advanced Christian thinkers in England were seeking for emancipation from the narrow formulæ of the Church and its stern dogmatism, that tended to suppress the demands of reason and stifle the dictates of conscience, it is interesting to note that in India there was a parallel revolt against the hide-bound conventions of rigid, lifeless Hinduism of the orthodox type. There was much give-and-take between Christianity and Hinduism without the one absolutely dominating the other.

It is very uncharitable to sit in judgment on a great man, by reason of one solitary blunder or error of judgment on his part. And we shall not attempt to do so. But the failing of Keshab Chandra Sen centred round a vital principle of reform which was mainly secured through his constant and strenuous



agitation. And when the fateful moment came, when his sincerity of faith in the Reform secured could be put to the test, he hesitated and yielded to adverse pressure. We do not, for a moment, suggest that this fiasco materially detracts from his great and splendid qualities as reformer, missionary enthusiast and man of prayer. We are referring to this incident which led to a violent division of counsels, and to the storm it raised as evidence of the uncompromising spirit of the young party of progress and reform.

The young prince of Cooch-Bihar was about to be sent to England. It was considered wise by the British Resident and others that he should be married to some girl, socially well-connected and refined.

Every eye looked to Keshab's daughter, who was well-educated, but was only twelve years of age. The Brahmo Marriage Act required that no marriages be solemnised and considered valid until the boy was sixteen and the girl fourteen years of age. Keshab also knew that the prince of Cooch-Bihar might contract polygamous alliances, even though he solemnly declared he would not do so. There were, further, no guarantees that idolatrous rites would not be observed during the ceremony of marriage, and in fact, these were practised, though, be it said to the credit of Keshab, that both he and his daughter withdrew when Hindu ceremonial was being introduced. Of course, there is this to be said in favour of Sen, that the marriage was not to be consummated before the return of the prince from England, by which time the girl would have attained maturity. But trivial though the incident might

seem if connected with some ordinary man, in Keshab, it was considered as a symptom of his moral break-down. His courageous spirit that defied conventions, his championship of unpopular causes, and his unique position as leader had raised high hopes in his followers, who expected him to rise superior to the solicitations of circumstance. But human nature is frail, and we see no reason why Keshab should be singled out for invective and diatribe, when greater men than he have succumbed to similar temptations.

This incident greatly weakened his position, though he survived it all, by sheer force of character and outstanding ability, and till his death in January, 1884, retained unchallenged supremacy in the Samāj.

But towards the end, his career was rather disappointing. As his influence grew, his followers showed him respect and veneration bordering on idolatrous homage. We have it, on undisputed authority, that he sternly rebuked these sycophantic tendencies among his followers. But the sphinx-eyed vigilance of critics and even friends suggested approbation of unbridled flattery and effusive compliments. Nor was Keshab much to blame. He towered head and shoulders above his contemporaries, and as such respect and even homage were his bare due. In every country in the world, including those well-known for progress and democracy, conspicuous leaders have a way of being regarded as "tin gods." More so, would this obtain in India, where people are naturally hero-worshippers, and have erected many a noble shrine in honour of

great men. The ineradicable instincts of the people lead them to believe that great men are gods. We are not approving of Keshab-worship, only venturing an explanation of what happens, very nearly in all countries, in regard to great men either truly great or enjoying fictitious or spurious greatness.

Ever since his memorable visit to Rama Krishna's shrine, about 1874 or 1875, Keshab became more Hindu in his out-look, and desired to preserve as much of Hinduism as was consistent with his monotheistic position, even allegorising away some ceremonial that he wanted to retain. He was further convinced of the propriety of attempting a harmony of all religions, believing all religions to have common elements of truth. This was rather a "climb down" from his previous recognition of the imperious claims of Christianity and fervent loyalty to the person of Christ. We cannot help quoting some of his remarkable utterances: "My Christ, my sweet Christ, the brightest jewel of my heart, the bridal adornment of my soul—for twenty years have I cherished Him in this my miserable heart. Though often defiled and persecuted by the world, I have found sweetness and joy unutterable in my Master Jesus. . . . The mighty artillery of His love He levelled against me, and I was vanquished, and I fell at his feet. . . . None but Jesus deserved this bright, this precious diadem, India, and Jesus shall have it."

And again :

"I say that the New Dispensation stands upon the same level with the Jewish dispensation, the Christian dispensation, and the Vaishnava dispensation



through Chaitanya. It is a divine dispensation fully entitled to a place among the various dispensations and revelations of the world. But is it equally divine, equally authoritative? Christ's dispensation is said to be divine. I say that this dispensation is equally divine." But he felt that he, personally, was only a humble instrument through whom the revelation was to be communicated to the world, and while in the penitent and self-depreciatory mood, he would recognise his inferiority to "My Master Jesus."

"If I honour Jesus," he said, "and claim a place, among His disciples, is there not another side of my life which is carnal and worldly and sinful. . . . Then tell me not I am trying to exalt myself. No, a prophet's crown sits not on my head. My place is at Jesus' feet."

Among other influences imbibed by Keshab from Rama Krishna was the liability to alternating moods of despondency and exaltation: when subject to the former, he would humble himself in the dust and speak, in the most affectionate and reverent phraseology, of Christ as one that forgives sin and brings about moral transformation; and when seized by the latter, he would place himself on an equality with the world's greatest and best, would speak of himself as a prophet of the New Dispensation, would claim special direct revelations from God, on occasions of great moment and would try to lay down the law to his adherents. Rama Krishna did exactly the same. He would refrain from even calling himself a teacher of men, would gladly listen to another's

teaching, and speak of himself in the most disparaging terms, but when his temperament altered, he would claim access to the secrets of the Most Highest, would teach as if having authority and conveyed the impression that he had supernormal powers.

## IV

### SWAMI DAYA-NANDA SARASWATI

(1824-1883)

EUROPEAN travellers in India are naturally impressed with the stateliness and beauty of the Taj Mahal, that noble monument of Indian art. There is another building, which is quite likely to escape their notice, being far, far less imposing in point of architectural design and idea, situated some three miles below Hardawar and built on 900 acres of redeemed jungle track, that stands as a permanent memorial to the unique services to India of an enthusiastic Hindu reformer. It were sheer sacrilege to compare the two buildings in reference to their artistic pretensions. The institution to which we refer is the Gurukula (literally "seat of learning") established in 1902, mainly through the efforts of Mahatama Munshi Ram, a successful pleader of Jullundhur, and one of the most prominent members of the vegetarian section of the Arya Samāj. At the moment of writing this Gurukula contains more than 300 students, about forty in the college classes and the remaining in the various forms of the School Department. There are thirteen superintendents and a full complement of most competent teachers,



who together with the governor, Mr. Munshi Ram, stand committed to vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. The scholars are admitted to the school when only seven or eight years of age, and must remain on the rolls for sixteen years. Before admission they must take the vows of chastity, obedience and poverty and renew these vows ten years later. During this period, the students must be Brahmachāris, *i.e.*, celibates. They can associate with no women and indeed their own relations visit them usually about twice a year, with the permission of the governor and in the presence of one of the superintendents.

The governor draws no salary for his services, and in fact has given away to the school almost the entire earnings of a lifetime and the value of his estate. The teachers, that are distinguished graduates of Indian Universities, are only given maintenance allowance. The staff work in cordial co-operation and in complete loyalty to the governor, who has won their confidence through his winsome manners and selfless devotion to duty. The scholars lead a completely communal life, having all things in common. Even presents and gifts brought by their parents or guardians are equally divided among the scholars. In seasons of sickness, the various students gladly take up nursing by rotation. Till the age of fourteen, the pupils are exclusively well-grounded in Sanskrit and in the central ideas of Hindu philosophy and religion, through the medium of Hindi or Sanskrit. As yet they are not introduced to the culture or ideas of Western civilisation. When

this preliminary discipline is over, they are then taught English, the physical sciences, philosophy and economics and related subjects, in accordance with the curriculum of universities on the English model. There is a well-equipped library attached to the Gurukula, as also physical and chemical laboratories. There are industrial and technological classes connected with the school for the benefit of all. Strenuous physical exercise is insisted on as part of the training.

The scholars pay no tuition fees but only a mere pittance for board and residence. They dress in saffron robes of the devotee. The College Board of Control had decided to abolish even these nominal charges with a view to bringing the institution into line with say the ancient Hindu University of Taxila. But paucity of funds, the writer understands, was the only barrier to the proposed abolition.

This remarkable institution, whose promoters rightly believe in religious discipline as the bed-rock of a national system of education, is a living memento to the hero of our present little sketch. It is a unique educational experiment, combining a revived Hindu monasticism with European culture of an advanced type. The main idea is to instil into the impressionable minds of the young the wealth and magnificence of their own religious and cultural heritage, thus trying to avoid the mental disturbance which might otherwise result as the central ideas of western science and philosophy came into violent conflict with crude or animistic religious notions. The school is so situated that the minds of the young

are in constant touch with nature, the snow-clad peaks of the Himalayas rising in proud and solitary splendour above the lower hills at the foot of the Upper Ganges. The students are thus in communion with the freshness and vari-coloured beauties of nature, as were the Munis and Rishis of ancient India, that were inspired to write the sublime hymns of the Rigveda, long before the dogmas and creeds of a later priest-ridden Hindustān became a clogging material to the flow of soul.

It is under these surroundings that the institution professes to train and equip boys to be useful citizens and religious and national leaders. The general atmosphere may impress the Westerner as somewhat confining and restricting, isolated from the facts and realities of the surrounding world. The institution even undertakes to provide suitable wives, sharing common ideals with the scholar, when the prolonged probation and novitiate are over.

Should our traveller continue in his peregrinations throughout India, he will come upon another magnificent institution, the Dayananda Anglo-Vedic College, situated on the Lower Mall in Lahore, and bearing the imprint of our hero's genius. This was established in 1885 by a group of Arya Samajists who were convinced that the most effective means, in modern times, of preserving the teachings of Dayananda was not only missionary propaganda to which the Samāj stood committed, but also a net-work of educational institutions financed, conducted and entirely staffed by Arya Samajists. To keep abreast of the times, it was felt that the appeal to the educated classes could only



thus be adequately made. To show that progressive Hindu traditions will well harmonise with the latest discoveries of science and the newest teachings of philosophy ; to inculcate reverence for India's past, during the period the young were sedulously engaged in secular learning ; to enlist the sympathy, zeal and intellectual powers of the college undergraduates in interpreting and developing the priceless teachings bequeathed to them by Dayananda, some such institution was, according to them, necessary. Besides, they were zealous to show that the Samāj was not merely a proselytising machine, but had outlined before it an ambitious educational and social reform programme. It was also felt that thus alone could the danger of Christian missions be minimised and countervailed, since missionary institutions were not purely propagandist, but also educative, organised for medical relief, famine relief and general philanthropic purposes. It is worthy of notice, that the initiation of the Arya Samāj has for the first time called into being a vigorous, aggressive Hindu propaganda, with the object of reconverting to Hinduism converts to faiths like Islām and Christianity, as also for capturing converts from orthodox Hinduism. I have advisedly applied the term Hindu to Aryas, since at the Census for 1912, they returned themselves as Hindus by religion and of the Vedic Dharma by sect.

There was a split among the promoters of the D.A.V. College and members of its governing bodies on the important issue whether Vedic tradition

should be exclusively upheld before the rising generation of undergraduates, especially earlier in their college career, or whether the English curriculum of studies should occupy a prominent place. Rightly or wrongly, influential men on the Board of Control decided for English education, making ample provision for religious instruction, and the performance of sacred rites. There is a hostel, attached to the D.A.V. College, where the scholars live and carry on their studies, in an atmosphere that encourages their religious ideals and provides for strict supervision in other important details. Students of the college, above referred to, carry off a large number of prizes and scholarships every year from the University of the Punjāb, as also a much larger proportion of degrees than any other college. No account of the above college would be adequate which does not pay a tribute to the unselfish and patriotic services of Lala Hans Rāj, who continued as its principal for more than thirty years, receiving no salary, only a bare subsistence allowance from a generous brother.

It may also be mentioned in passing that admission to the above college is open to all, and that no invidious caste distinctions are tolerated. Professor Sidney Webb, in his introduction to Lala Lajpat Rai's exceedingly interesting volume on "the Arya Samāj," mentions the remarkable instance of a very high-caste Brahmin and his wife, teaching "a score or two" of pariah children, and of living under the same roof with them. The Shuddhi (or reclaiming) work carried on for the social uplift of the depressed classes, by openly admitting them to the Hindu

faith, will also tend considerably to weaken the caste-consciousness that has so far operated against the "untouchables" and denied them the benefits of a human existence. The cumulative effect of the Shuddhi propaganda, if as vigorously conducted in the future, as in the past, and of the denunciation of caste in theory and principle, may altogether render impossible the anomalies referred to. In exceedingly conservative countries like England and India, class or caste may not be quite possible to abolish, in the near future. Yet the Arya Samaj seems to be animated with the right spirit to destroy the foundations of caste.

Under the ægis of the Arya Samāj women are being educated, and their seclusion is being steadily discouraged. Widows are allowed to remarry, should they chose to do so. The untouchables are being reclaimed, and on admission to the Samāj invested with the sacred thread that till recently was the monopoly of the Brahmins. Orphanages, schools, colleges, Gurukulas, numerous places for corporate worship, Maha Kanya Pathashālas for girls, these form the milestones in the Samāj's onward march to progress. Early marriages are under a ban.

All these wholesome developments are undoubtedly due to the great inspiration given by the Swami's convictions and teachings and by his life. Religious self-torture is condemned by the Samāj as a degrading penance that is gross superstition and has no religious value. Shraddhas or food-offerings for the souls of departed relatives are positively discountenanced as mere animistic rites. Child-marriages are strictly



forbidden in theory, though it is difficult to say for certain what happens in actual fact. It is to be presumed, however, that a large majority of progressives do observe the ordinance that men are not to marry till they are twenty-five and women till they are sixteen. An exchange of photographs between the contracting parties to a marriage was suggested by Dayananda as an improvement on the old-fashioned marriages, where the parties do not even see each other's faces until they are married.

The history of a nation is indissolubly bound up with the biography of its illustrious men and women. It is the lives and personalities of a country's heroes and heroines that profoundly affect its prevailing ethical standards and, in fact, call into being a new environment in which the masses might live and move. Judged by any standards, however severe or exacting, Daya Nanda Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samāj in Bombay and Upper India was indeed a great man, not only in the estimation of his friends and adherents, but what is still more striking in the judgment of his opponents as well. The Indian tradition, whatever its failings and limitations still, has been considerably enriched by the Swami's message and life-work. It would have been poorer but for his opportune appearance and the grand delivery of a great message. Even to-day, the contagious influence of his virile, independent and truth-loving personality is visibly operative in the various activities, social, religious, educational and propagandist, on which the Arya Samāj has courageously launched. Daya Nanda, though dead, yet speaketh

in clear, clarion accents to the advocates of social and religious reform. It is easy, fatally easy, to praise him ; easier still to condemn his teachings, at least some of them ; but it is difficult, very difficult, to appraise the nature of his services to the national regeneration of India. And yet, this task, arduous though it be, must be undertaken in a spirit that combines generous appreciation with fidelity to truth.

The Swami may, quite appropriately, be called the Luther of Hinduism, since he has, beyond doubt, rendered the same service to Hinduism by way of purging it of its errors, excesses and anomalies, that Martin Luther did to the cause of Reformation in Europe, towards the beginning of the sixteenth century. Opinions may differ as to the precise value or permanence of the contributions either of Luther in the course of the sixteenth century in Europe, or of Daya Nanda in the last decades of the nineteenth century in India. But there can be no two opinions on the point that both worked for religious emancipation, for liberty of conscience, for the right of individual judgment and for the assertion of individuality against the cramping, crushing effects of time-old ecclesiastical systems. There may be nothing inherently wrong in a system as such. In fact all human efforts must be co-ordinated and systematised, before they can be prolific of lasting and far-reaching results. But the moment a system, in its overpowering zeal, however laudable that zeal may in itself be, becomes a menace to individuality, to personal character, to the right of

interpreting truth, to the capacity for challenging error enjoyed in various degrees by all individuals: the moment a system begins to extort a mechanical obedience to tradition, whatever its character, and to mandates however arbitrary; to the fiats of will exercised by an interested hierarchy of priests—all that we can say, then, is that the life has departed from that system. And a mere semblance of life is worse than the trappings of death. It is during crises when bad and defunct systems professed to play the *rôle* of vital power, that good and great men have been needed—and have appeared.

And history has a way of repeating itself. Luther appeared when his appearance and bold championship of what he conceived to be the Truth, were badly needed. Daya Nanda appeared in India, when it was time that the stagnant pools of a decadent tradition must be troubled. Both had great strength of will, tenacity of purpose, personal magnetism of an extraordinary kind, and a bold, far-reaching vision. Both had their conception of truth, limited by the theological pre-conceptions peculiar to their respective epochs and countries, and both made a dash forward in the direction of progress and achieved a considerable measure of emancipation.

“Yesterday was the four-hundredth anniversary,” says *The Times Literary Supplement* of 1st November, 1917, “of a religious action which convulsed the whole life of Europe and started movements which have revolutionised the course of history. On the



eve of All Saints' Day, 1517, an Augustinian monk, who was also an influential professor in the young University of Wittenberg, in Saxony, affixed to the door of the University Church of All Saints ninety-five theses, or propositions 'from love and zeal for the elucidation of truth.' "

No less startling and epoch-making was the day when Swami Daya Nanda Saraswati, fearlessly proclaimed, on November 17th, 1879, before a vast assemblage of Hindus, presided over by the Maharajah of Benares, that polytheism was a monstrous fraud devised by priests that were blind leaders of the blind; that caste, that iniquitous system that has lain like an incubus on social relations in India, was originally designed to be only a scientific division of labour on the basis of inherited and developed skill, and on the various aptitudes that people respectively acquired; that ancient Hindu women were free and equals of men, entitled to respect, honour and the fullest use of their opportunities; that only those could be called priests that were pure, learned and industrious; that social degradation was possible only by reason of wasted talent and atrophied powers; that social elevation to the highest caste of the twice-born was open, even according to Manu's Dharama Shastra to the meanest of pariahs; that India's downfall was owing to her disloyalty to her splendid heritage; that the path of salvation lay along a restored loyalty to the priceless revelations of truth as embodied in the Vedas.

The people listened with tense interest. Priests

had mustered in strength from all parts of India, men of renown and vast erudition, whose very names were uttered with bated breath. Grammarians and schoolmen too, that never tired of verbal jugglery and the infinite conjugations of sacred verbs. It was, indeed, an ordeal by battle, the unpopular David meeting the Goliaths of the old order in mortal combat, confident that on his heroic stand hung the issues of the day. A good deal of hair-splitting distinctions were made as also a brave display of sham learning.

Amid ridicule and jeers, the verdict of the assembly was given against the enthusiastic reformer. His enemies made an open show of his supposed defeat when he stumbled upon some phrases, in an attempt to give a reply that might have silenced their clamour.

He was given no time ; so with loud acclaims of victory, the throng left the vanquished hero.

There are very interesting side-issues which might be profitably discussed perhaps in another book such as : What part has idolatry played in moulding the Hindu tradition ? Is it possible to conceive of idolatry as " the outward symbol of an inward grace " and as part of the Hindu's artistic heritage, quite apart from religious considerations ? Does the Hindu worshipper when he bows down before an idol, consciously pay homage to the idol as if it were to him a god in its own essence, by its own virtue, so to speak, or only as a symbol reflecting one or more of the numerous attributes of divinity ? The elaborate ritual and the extremely fascinating

though complicated ceremonial of both the Roman and High Anglican Churches might possibly suggest points of affinity, however remote or far-fetched the affinity, with Hindu rites. Is it desirable to retain the one as artistic accompaniments to religious worship, as the paraphernalia of outward, co-operate devotion, and at the same time to denounce even the less gross and more pardonable forms of idolatry as debasing, in the name, both of rationalism and pure, undefiled religion ?

But, quite obviously, the above issues are altogether beyond the scope of the present book, which deals with outstanding facts and forces, and views these facts and forces, and passes judgments on their result according as they make the convergence towards national solidarity easier or else thwart and hamper unification.

More than thirty years before the above incident, one night, a young lad of fourteen called Mūl Shankara, born of Sāmvedi Brahmin parentage, was keeping a strict vigil over the festival of the god Shiva, as his father and other relations were overcome with sleep. The lad was intelligent and keenly observant of all that happened around him. But from early childhood his mind was steeped in idolatrous notions, the supremacy of the priesthood and the omnipotence of the gods of wood and stone. And so, naturally, he was lying prostrate in front of Shiva on this particular night called Shivarātri (or night dedicated to Shiva) bravely struggling against the overmastering inclination to fall asleep. Three days' fasting had preceded this night vigil.



The spirit indeed was willing, but the flesh was weak. The blessings of the powerful god for his reverent worship and willing abstention from food and sleep, so the lad might then be thinking, would more than compensate for the severe bodily discomfort. Besides, his father's word was law to him. He knew what was good for the little Mūl Shankara's spiritual life. That was enough for the lad.

The boy was expecting great things from the god he was told was so powerful. As the solemn hush of the small hours of the morning fell upon the place, a mouse crept out of a hole, began to nibble at the offerings made to the god and what was still worse, began to run across the god's body as if in contemptuous defiance of his presence and powers, if he possessed any.

This trivial incident marked the turning point in little Mūl Shankar's life. It set him thinking. It shattered his illusions regarding the powers of the divinity. This momentary vision released his powers of thinking which tradition and parental authority had all but suppressed. And the boy was obedient to the vision, willing to follow wherever it led. That night was a red-letter day for the boy, and through him was to be the precursor of a glorious dawn of religious emancipation for the masses in Upper India, for, from the moment the mouse took liberties with the sacred body of his god, the boy realised quite subconsciously perhaps, that the god and in fact all the gods of the Hindu pantheon, fell from their pedestals, humiliated and exposed.

But he must not be in a hurry. Surely there must

be an explanation. And who could be a better person to approach in reference to this unsavoury occurrence than his own father, plunged by this time in deep slumbers, in the same temple? Quite nervously, with tremendous hesitation, the boy woke up his father, and asked him why the god should tolerate such gross familiarity. Only to be scolded by the father for interrupting his sleep. These things were not to be disputed or debated. He was not to reason why. His was only to fast and keep the vigil faithfully. If he failed in that, he would be scolded or chastised. Some very bad calamity might soon overtake him. He must not venture into the sanctuary. That was for the hoary priests of the ancient gods. And he was only a little mite of a boy, with limited intelligence, quite uninitiated, his little brain quite inadequate to the understanding of these deep mysteries. He must do as he was told. He must believe what he was told to. We have heard and our fathers have told us of old! So it has been of old, and so must it remain for all eternity.

But the boy was not to be bamboozled with these verbal trickeries. The moment he made sure that the father had again gone to sleep, he ran home and having taken some light refreshments, soon went off to sleep. He was no more to be bothered with the empty flummeries, the pomp and circumstance, the elaborate ritual that was all devised to placate this helpless, speechless dummy, the despicable toady that could not even drive away a mouse!

Even young school boys in their earlier forms

might feel inclined to laugh over the insignificant incident that we have described at some length. Only let them remember, let us all remember, that this incident has been epoch-making in the life of Mūl Shankara. It made history for India.

Some thirty years later, a learned pandit that had drunk deep at the Helicon of Vedic lore, that was anxious to reform Hinduism and purge it of the excrescences that an ignorant and obscurantist priesthood had gathered round the pure gold of Vedic tradition, sounded forth a trumpet of defiance at the very head and centre of orthodox Hinduism, Benares. That Pundit was Swami Daya Nanda Saraswati. Our readers might be astounded to learn that this protagonist of reform ; this iconoclast that demanded the dethronement of the gods of the Hindu pantheon; this impatient idealist that was burning with holy zeal to fuse into the dry bones of lifeless ceremonies and dead orthodox formalities of a once sublime but now moribund faith, the sublime and transcendent passion for a living, loving, merciful, just and omniscient God—was no other than Mūl Shankara, the disillusioned lad that was later converted to an exalted form of monotheism, and which faith, he was seriously convinced, was to be found in its pristine purity in the Vedas.

“ Back to the Vedas ” was his battle cry, as the great sannyāsi emerged on the controversial arena. India's only hope was, according to him, to rediscover the faith that was once delivered to the Munis and Rishis as these were enwrapped in holy meditation, grappling with the ultimate mysteries of life.



Surely in India, if anywhere, has the battle of the soul been fought with a fierce intensity that knows of very few parallels in the annals of religious experience. And these champions of the Eternal have left behind them the records of their mystic struggles and of their triumphant discoveries of the spiritual realm, all recorded and preserved for us in the Vedas. To the Swami, no doubt, the Vedas were the only revealed word of God ; infallible, containing in them the secret not only of all religious truth, but also the promise and potentiality of all scientific discovery, of the latest philosophical view of life, of mechanical inventions and political theory. But of this later.

But what, after all, has this mysterious conversion led to ? The students of comparative religion or of the science of religion might, no doubt, point out that the learned Swami, in repudiating the traditional faith and striving to propagate the above ideas had only fallen from one error on to another. If what he boldly repudiated was erroneous, false, degrading, priest-ridden, is what he later preached capable of vindication on strict scientific grounds ?

The limits of the present book preclude our entering on technical metaphysical issues or our reviewing the Swami's teachings in the light of the latest findings of the science of religion. We are not primarily interested, in the course of these essays, with the Arya Samāj *as promulgating a body of doctrines*, but with the movement in so far as it has worked for national regeneration, for instilling the ideals of progress, social purity, nationality, self-

reliance and social reform into the mind of the rising generation in India. Judged by these criteria the Swami will continue to occupy a conspicuous position in the muster-roll of fame, as one who undermined the very foundations of orthodoxy and effected a revolution in ideas and outlook in an exceedingly conservative country like India, and prepared a way for the wonderful Renaissance whose varied healthy manifestations we see to-day, in every department of thought, feeling and action.

“ Words, words piled on words and words again ” the sceptically inclined may say to the above. They evidently ask for signs and wonders. To such we shall point out the Gurukula in Hardawār, which as an educational experiment along indigenous lines possesses unique value, and together with its highly gifted and self-sacrificing governor, Mahātma Munshi Rāma, is a living monument to Daya Nand’s life and teachings. With a stroke of the pen has the Arya Samāj changed the individual worship of the Hindu devotee into organised congregational worship of believers professing a unity of faith ; it has served as a pathfinder in the trackless jungle of Hindu beliefs ; it has abolished caste ; it has demolished priesthood.

At the magnificent Durbar held in Delhi on the 1st of January, 1877, when Queen Victoria was proclaimed, during Lord Lytton’s viceroyalty, as Empress of India, there was a remarkable man present on the occasion, as guest of one of the ruling princes, who was destined to revolutionise the religious ideas and preconceptions of orthodox India.

That man was Mūl Shankara, the subject of the present sketch. It is curious that very few should know of his original and real name almost till the day of his death. He was born in 1824, in the town of Tankara, situated in the Indian state of Morvi Gujerat, Western India. His father was a wealthy banker in the town and was, moreover, Jamadar or headman of the small village, which office the family held as a hereditary right. Amba Shankar, for that was the father's name, was very anxious naturally that the son should be well-grounded in the tenets of Shivaism, and turn out eventually to be a worshipper of the god Shiva. At the early age of fourteen, the boy had committed to memory large portions of the Vedas, besides being trained in the elaborate rules of Sanskrit grammar.

Mūl Shankar was hardly twenty-two when his parents determined to correct his heterodox views on religion, by saddling him with the duties of married life. For some years previously, he had taken asylum with a kindly uncle who sympathised with his point of view and let him do things in his own way. But on his death, he was compelled to revert to the vigilant supervision of the father, who ever since the memorable Shivaratri, was alarmed at the boy's persistent refusal, bordering on obstinacy, to pay homage to the tribal divinity. His grief over the uncle's death was intensified on the loss of a dear sister and filled his mind with eagerness to try and unravel the mysteries of life and death and to attain *Moksha*, i.e., release from the



continuous cycle of births and rebirths. It was at the psychological moment when his mind was fired with the ambition to learn the Vedas and grasp their original intention ; to renounce the pleasures of life, to bear hardness as a faithful soldier of Bharatvarsha ; to prepare himself for the spiritual upliftment of his country : it was at this crisis that the father wanted to upset his plans, by marrying him off and thus killing his fine enthusiasms by the hum-drum routine which such a married life would impose on him. But not willing to submit to this ordeal, the boy ran away from home.

The next twenty-five years *i.e.*, 1845-1870 form a prolonged probation during which he met various Sannyasis of established repute for learning and piety. He voraciously devoured their teachings, only accepting them with certain mental reservations. It may be noted that on his first flight he was caught. But he had made up his mind to break away from the trammels of home, and so ran away again, this time effectively evading pursuit and burning all the traces behind him. One of the ascetics called Brahmananda convinced him, for a season, of the truth of the Vedantic teaching that the soul is an emanation from the divine and individual souls as so many self-expressions of the Divine substance, that the soul and Brahma are one ; that Brahma is the immanent life of the Universe, and not a transcendent God or Creator who created the worlds out of nothing. But this teaching was soon given up by Dayananda as unhealthy and unpractical.

The reality of this world, the trustworthiness of the senses, the reality of human experience and struggle was too visibly imprinted on his mind to allow of his accepting the temporal order as illusory in its character. Mūl Shankara was not, by nature, a subtle metaphysician, fond of logical casuistry and wordy debate. He was a practical idealist. He was keen on arriving at some simple philosophy of life that could be strictly defined, and whose terms would bear a simple and unsophisticated statement. He was interested more in life ; in the practical difficulties of life, in the means of escape from the perplexities that beset every-day life ; more than in some sublime synthesis which from the metaphysical standpoint, might throw ample light on theoretical problems suggested by the ultimate issues in philosophy.

He next met Swami Parmananda, after some years, who was a sannyasi of the Saraswati order, and who, after continuous refusal recognised Mūl Shankara as a sannyasi of his order, being struck by the latter's originality in ideas and deep scholarship. From that moment Mūl Shankara became Swami Dayananda Saraswati. His one great object in asking for recognition as recluse of an established order was that he might thereby escape the pressure that might yet be exerted by his parents to get him married should they come to know of his whereabouts. A recluse renounces, for all time, caste, home, marriage and all other mundane attachments and obligations.

Throughout all his wanderings he was seized with

a consuming desire to come upon ascetics who would expound to him the mysteries of the *Yoga* philosophy. Perhaps he felt that through the exposition of yoga (*i.e.*, communion with the Infinite) he might attain to emancipation from the ceaseless round of transmigration that haunted his imagination.

In 1860, Dayananda met Swami Virjananda, a great authority on Panini's grammar, in Muttra; an exceedingly able pundit, but very irritable and overbearing. He refused to initiate Dayananda into his teachings till he threw all the books he had on him into the river Jumna. But Dayananda sat at his feet, patiently, submissively, drinking in his teachings, once even bearing corporal punishment without demur. This pupilage lasted for two years and-a-half. Swami Virjananda was absolutely convinced of the veracity and reliability of the Vedas, but indignantly rejected all later accretions as so many lies manufactured by ignorant and misleading priests, to serve their personal ends. On the day of leave-taking, in May, 1863, Virjananda asked Dayananda for the customary fee paid as a token of appreciation, knowing that Swami Dayananda had none to give. He asked Dayananda to go and proclaim the pure Vedic faith and combat Puranic errors. Never was pledge more loyally redeemed.

Daya Nand was essentially a reformer, not a great original thinker. His commentaries on Vedic texts are "more ingenious than ingenuous," to use the words of the last Census report concerning his work. But he felt that, living in the modern world,



it was necessary that certain pernicious customs ought to be given up and a progressive mentality acquired. He was constantly in touch, when he began his public career, with educated Hindus who discussed with him how the Reformation and the Renaissance were made possible in Europe. So, being a shrewd practical man, he proclaimed to the conservative masses that the germs of science, medicine, art, literature, philosophy and religions were to be found in the Vedas only awaiting maturity and fruition. There was, indeed, a certain degree of conviction that the Vedas were the encyclopædia of all knowledge, but the feeling must also have been strong in his mind that an appeal to the past was the way in which the masses could be weaned from idol-worship and veneration of mere formalism.

Having arrived at certain conclusions he read these back into the Vedas and pleaded for unquestioning faith in their infallibility. His followers are noted more for their character and militant spirit than for intellectual ability or wide culture. There is a large proportion of men of more than average ability in the ranks of the Arya Samāj, but with the possible exception of Lala Lajpat Rai and Mahatama Munshi Ram, the community has not produced many conspicuous instances of scholarship. There have been, of course, a proportion of men high up in professional careers or in Government service—men of the stamp of the late Lala Lāl Chand and others—but we shall look in vain for men with breadth of vision and large mental calibre, from the community that might “rub shoulders” with Ranade or Tagore,

Gokhale or Keshab Chandra Sen. When we bear in mind, however, that the Punjab, where the Samāj has most flourished, is not educationally advanced, even though it is making rapid strides now, and that the whole fabric of the Samajic doctrines rests on superficial foundations—the infallibility of the Vedas as the repository of all knowledge—we shall make generous allowances for the incapacity to produce outstanding leaders. I have no intention to disparage the splendid work done by the Samaj. I should only say that any movement that calls itself progressive, and yet rests on the verbal inspiration of ancient scriptures, and their being a storehouse of all possible human knowledge, is bound, sooner or later, to develop a narrow, hardened theology, and produce disastrous reactions on the mind, be the movement in question professedly Christian, Hindu or Islamic.

We conclude this chapter with a concrete instance of how the Samāj does splendid work by means of a progressive interpretation of texts, rites or ceremonies apart from the consideration whether these texts, rites and ceremonies admit of such liberal construction or not. I am quoting from Lala Lājpat Rai's interesting book : " The Arya Samāj : An Indian Movement," pp. 86-87.

" Devas (gods) are those who are wise and learned ; asuras (demons) those who are foolish and ignorant ; Rakshas those who are wicked and sin-loving ; and pishachas, those whose mode of life is filthy and debasing.

" Devapuja (or the worship of the gods) consists

in showing honour and respect to the wise and learned, to one's father, mother, and preceptor, to the preachers of the true doctrine, to a just and impartial sovereign, to lovers of righteousness, to chaste men and women.

“Tirtha (*i.e.*, pilgrimages) is that by means of which ‘the sea of pain’ is crossed. It consists in truthfulness of speech, in the acquisition of true knowledge, in cultivating the society of the wise and good, in the practice of morality, in contemplating the nature and attributes of the Deity with concentrated attention, in active benevolence, in the diffusion of education, and so on. Rivers and other so-called holy places are not Tirthas.”

Most ingenious explanations, indeed, of customary observances do these statements appear to be. But how else can you combat wrong ideas except by the substitution of right ones? The Swami was, in this respect, full of moral enthusiasm and initiative.

The late Madame Blavatsky pays the following compliment to Dayananda: “It is perfectly certain that India never saw a more learned Sanskrit scholar, a deeper metaphysician, a more wonderful orator and a more fearless denunciator of any evil than Dayananda, since the time of Shankaracharya.”



## V

### SIR SYED AHMAD KHĀN

(1817-1893)

WHAT Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the illustrious founder of the Brahma Samāj, did for the moral and intellectual rejuvenation of the Hindus, Sir Syed Ahmad has achieved for the social and educational betterment of the Muslims of India. There would be no educated Muhammadan community existing and flourishing to-day but for the heroic pioneer efforts and far-sighted vision of this great man, who did not see in the utter collapse of the Moghul Empire an argument for racial estrangement and enmity, nor yet a sign and symptom of the permanent moral decay of his community, only a fresh inspiration to summon courage, to accept the challenge, on behalf of his community, thrown by the arduous competitive spirit of the West, to serve as a pathfinder for his countrymen, to prepare them for that relentless competition through education and social reform, so that they may thus be equipped for the struggle which the introduction of Western civilisation had rendered inevitable. This would not have been possible save for the Syed's recognition that there were elements of progress and vitality in

the fuller, richer culture from the West, whatever the failings of its commercial exponents and that the assimilation of these elements would greatly enrich and amplify the old-fashioned notions of progress.

The overthrow of the Muhammadan Empire in India was complete when the Syed was born on 17th October, 1817, at the Imperial capital where the nominal suzerainty and shadow of the "great Moghul" still lingered. He bestowed titles and honours; was the centre of attraction in brilliant state-pageants; even received ceremonial courtesy and homage from the English Governor-General. But the sceptre had passed on to the East India Company. To the large bulk of Muhammadans the political catastrophe which resulted in the transference of authority to British rulers betokened the downfall of Islām itself. It meant to them, perhaps, an eternal depreciation of Oriental values, a great humbling of national pride and vassalage to an alien civilisation not founded on the sanctions of Muhammadan law. No longer would the exclusive avenue to lucrative employment be the traditional religious and classical training at the historic University of Patna—so many must have argued. The Infidel—according to them—had not only defiled the sanctuary, but demanded a strange and strenuous discipline in novel methods of government, in profane learning of a dubious nature. They had lost their kingdom. But it was still open to them not to sell their souls to the new learning. So they sulked, and refrained from deriving the benefits of western education.

Syed Ahmad saw with the flash of genius, that this mentality generated by the regrettable circumstances would seriously handicap his co-religionists in the keen competition for employment under the John Company. We do not suggest that he did not rise above the mere commercial aspects of the situation. In fact, he clearly perceived that the sullen attitude of the Muslims towards English education threatened the community with intellectual retrogression and narrowness of vision. But he also saw that the keen intellectual Hindus, whose fathers did likewise wield the sceptre of empire once, were capturing many of the subordinate appointments in the gift of the government, if so the *régime* of the East India Company may be called. Whatever to him personally, or to others, might be the merits or demerits of English education, his practical instincts made it clear to him that under the new conditions, his community must either accept the fresh ordeal or perish. But there was yet another side to the question. Western civilisation, whatever its failings, had embedded in it the discoveries of science, the triumphs of reason, and traditions of a practical, efficient business life.

On the ethical and religious side, there were not after all, according to him, fundamental differences between the two rival faiths, one professed by his countrymen and the other professed by the people into whose hands were delivered the reins of government. If rightly interpreted, Christianity and Islām had much in common, and rested on the common foundations of belief in the unity of the



Godhead, and respect for the patriarchs and concern for the *moral issues of life* as preached and upheld by Christ. Later, when He was removed, Christianity became encrusted with dogmas and creeds and the subtle casuistry of scholastics. But so was Islām in the course of the centuries hardened into fossilised teachings, lifeless formalism and mechanical obedience to the ipse dixits of an ignorant priestcraft, so radically opposed to the pure and lofty monotheism of the holy prophet of Arabia. There was no reason, whatever, why the adherents of the two faiths, the one in its rise, on the secular side, to power, and the other in a sad predicament because of the decline of its political prestige, should not shake hands and form a life-long friendship, co-operating towards common ends and loyally working side by side. And history has pronounced its verdict that the generous-minded Syed was right, both in principle and in anticipations of resulting good.

Syed Ahmad had a remarkable ancestry. His grandfather was given, in the reign of Alamgiv II., the titles of Jowahid Ali Khan and Jowad-ul-dowlah, being commander of 1,000 foot and 500 horse. His father Muhammad Taqi had so entirely renounced the world and set his face resolutely against participation in the gaieties and the dazzling splendour of court functions, that when offered the high office of Prime Minister by Emperor Akbar II., he politely declined it. It is obvious that the influence of the father's character and of his asceticism must have produced considerable effect on the young Ahmad's outlook on life,

even though he seldom inclined towards asceticism throughout his career. No less potent was the influence exerted by his mother. She would teach her little Ahmad rudiments of reading and writing, and before sending him off to sleep would make him repeat what he had learnt in the day. Syed Ahmad was evidently very well brought up, and was absolutely truthful and straightforward in his younger days, in his dealings with everyone, whatever his rank and office. There is an interesting little incident of his younger days which would well illustrate our statement

It is said that Syed Ahmad, while quite young, was to be presented with a *Khilāt* (*i.e.*, free gift of gold-embroidered costume) and was commanded by the Emperor to be present in time. In spite of the vigilance of his mother, Syed Ahmad overslept himself on the day fixed for the occasion, and hence could not arrive till the function was formally over. Later on, he happened to meet the Emperor, who without expressing annoyance, asked him sternly what he did with himself. The courtiers that had gathered round him expected that Syed Ahmad should give an ingenious explanation, highly flattering to the Emperor. To their dismay and horror, the little boy looked straight into the Emperor's face and told the strict literal truth. These characteristics, apparently trivial, augured well for the boy's, future. It is more than probable that he inherited his appreciation of the inherent value of right things from his austere and devout-minded father, who as a recluse had not only turned his back on Court favours

and ceremonial functions, but even refused the Imperial offer to be invested with his father's titles. It is the very least to say that Syed Ahmad even when young, could discriminate between substance and showy, glittering unreality. And this right perspective in regard to the relative value of things was characteristic of him till the end.

He early accepted government service and won golden opinions from English officials for reliability, impartiality and a sense of justice. He had acquired a working knowledge of English before entering the service. But, later, his frequent intercourse with officials encouraged him to follow up the study of the language more thoroughly. While harnessed with official duties, he completed a book of considerable archæological and historic interest, which aroused great interest and controversy and commended itself to the acceptance of his English colleagues. It is interesting to note that like Raja Ram Mohun Roy, he was somewhat suspicious of, if not quite hostile to, English ways and methods. But actual dealings with the English not only ended the strained feeling but fostered respect and right understanding. He was soon promoted to the office of subordinate Judge, a position which he filled with conspicuous ability, to the satisfaction of all.

Like Ram Mohun he was anxious to attempt a harmony of various faiths, while retaining his personal loyalty to a modified form of the faith he was nurtured in. So we find that just as the Raja wrote "the Precepts of Jesus," so the Syed with a



view to reconcile the minds of the more conservative among his co-religionists to the essentials of the Christian faith, wrote a commentary on portions of "the Genesis."

During the Mutiny, the Syed rendered yeoman service to the British cause, and through his unflinching loyalty, presence of mind and contemptuous defiance of danger, saved many valuable lives of both men and women. Sir John Strachey, in the course of his speech at Aligarh, on 11th December, 1880, paid him an eloquent compliment: "No man ever gave nobler proofs of conspicuous courage and loyalty to the British Government than were given by him in 1857. No language that I could use would be worthy of the devotion he showed." On one occasion when the house occupied by Messrs. Shakespeare, Johnson, Adam and others was surrounded by the rebels under the command of a rebel chief, and the lives of European men and women were every moment in jeopardy, he plucked up courage, divested himself of all weapons and cash and headed straight for Nawab Khān in spite of the entreaties of his English comrades, who felt that he set out on a forlorn hope. On being challenged by the mutinous sentries he calmly assured them that he desired to consult their commander, and with extreme coolness marched up to him, assured him of his bona fide intentions, appealed to the rebel chief's sense of honour and asked him under what conditions he would let them escape with their lives.

He exercised such strong personal magnetism on the chief that he trusted Syed Ahmad implicitly,

walked down with him quite unaccompanied into the English Bungalow, and there received a formally signed and sealed document conferring on him the right to rule the provinces till the British returned. The negotiations being complete, the commander of the mutineers faithfully promised to let the Europeans escape with impunity, if only they could leave before two o'clock the next morning. Equally imposing was Syed Ahmad's manner of approach to Nawab Khān. With cool courage he addressed the commander : " I have neither arms nor money, but please accept my nuzzur (*i.e.*, offering) by putting your hand on mine ; hearty congratulations that you have received the country of your ancestors. But what is to be done with the Europeans inside that house ? " Some time after peace was restored Mr. Shakespeare, the collector, wrote a letter to the commissioner of Rohil Khand, from which the following excerpt may be interesting to our readers.

" All the three officers (*i.e.*, Syed Ahmad Khān, Mir Turāb Ali Tehsildar and Rahmat Khān, Deputy Collector) on whom I am reporting have shown conspicuous loyalty, but if I were required to draw a distinction, I should do so in favour of Syed Ahmad Khān, whose clear, sound judgment, and rare uprightness and zeal could scarcely be surpassed."

Some little while after the Rebellion of 1857, Syed Ahmad wrote an interesting book on the causes of the Indian Revolt which, however, was not published till 1873. In this book the author urged many eloquent pleas for mutual understanding and study of

the people's point of view, for trusting the people, consulting them on questions of policy and custom, and the fostering of confidence and mutual self-respect as between the rulers and the ruled. In one remarkable passage he says: "Most men agree in thinking that it is highly conducive to the welfare and prosperity of government—indeed, is essential to its stability, that the people should have a voice in its councils. It is from the voice of the people only that government can learn whether its projects are likely to be well received. The voice of the people can alone check errors in the bud, and warn us of dangers, before they burst upon and destroy us. A needle may dam the gushing rivulet, an elephant must turn aside from the swollen torrent. This voice, however, can never be heard, and this security never acquired, unless the people are allowed a share in the consultations of government. . . . The security of a government is founded on its knowledge of the character of the governed, as well as on its careful observance of their rights and privileges. They are in every instance the inheritance of the peculiar race." One hears faint, distant echoes in these utterances of Indian members of Council and their indirect representation therein.

The vision of the Syed is not complete. But we must well bear in mind that he was only a child of his day. Education and enlightenment had not then spread far and wide, and a sense of national solidarity was then only germinant. The utmost political ambition of the Syed's was confined to an Indian member's nomination to the Council, to give



voice to the Indian point of view. The demand for political autonomy, for acquiring control over the Administration might have been considered by him in the nature of sacrilege or blasphemy. Nor were the times ripe for it. The older civilisation was just overthrown, the probation along modern lines of education had just begun. The lessons of responsibility had yet to be learnt as also persistence in familiarising oneself with new procedure and modes of thought. It is doubtless true that there was not much to choose between the social and political anarchy prevailing before the collapse of the Moghul Empire and the rapacity and misgovernment of the company whose motto obviously was : " Each one for himself and God for us all ! " One year we read of 50,000,000 people dying of famine, and the next published report of the Company congratulates their officers for phenomenal success in exacting a heavier revenue than ever before. Those were times of uncontrolled greed and unashamed corruption. But there were, here and there, honourable and upright men, with a keen sense of duty.

More especially did the reign of lawlessness continue unabated when the Syed was a youngster.

But the Syed was fully alive to the need for harmonious co-operation between the two sister-communities, *i.e.*, Hindus and Muhammadans. In characteristic oriental style he would say that Hindus and Muhammadans were the two eyes of the sweet-heart India, without whose joint focussing of vision on to the same objective, everything would look confused and indistinct in outline. It is true, that

after receiving his knighthood in the reign of Lord Lytton, he went back on some of his principles, took to reactionary views on Indian politics, out of sheer diplomacy and a desire to cater to official vanity, launched a propaganda of calumny and misrepresentation against the Indian National Congress, and swallowed most of his progressive views. But this should surprise no one. Greater men than he have fallen victims to official patronage and paid a heavy price for it. And no one can be more easily pardoned than Sir Syed, for his shrewd practical instincts never forsook him, and in spheres other than political he held on till the end as pioneer of vigorous reform and as one engaged in the ministry of reconciliation. Sir Henry Cotton in a well-known passage refers to him in "New India" as one who for diplomatic reasons apostatised from his ardent admiration for the keen political capacity of the Bengalis.

Some ten years after the assumption by the British crown of responsibility for the governance of India, the Syed decided to pay a visit to England. In July, 1869, we find him comfortably settled down in Mecklenburgh Square in London with his son Syed Mahmud who was the first Muhammadan student to accept a state scholarship, recently thrown open to Indians to enable them to prosecute further studies at English Universities. On the 15th October, of the same year, he contributed an exceedingly interesting letter to the *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, giving his miscellaneous impressions of life in London; parts of it sound almost childish,

but one can clearly see that the Syed was a keen observer of things and was anxious to improve Indian conditions. "All good things," to quote from the letter, "spiritual and worldly, which should be found in man, have been bestowed by the Almighty on Europe, and especially on England. By spiritual good things, I mean that the English carry out all the details of their religion which they believe to be the true one, with a beauty and excellence which no other nation can compare with. *This is entirely due to the education of men and women. . . .* If Hindustanis can only attain to civilisation, they will probably, owing to their many natural powers, become if not the superiors, at least the equals of England." *The Syed was, from the very beginning of his residence in this country, profoundly convinced that apart from education the attainment to a higher level of civilisation was not possible. He was, further, convinced that women must also be educated, for otherwise they can not follow the life of Reason on which he so much insisted, nor could they be good mothers or intelligent wives.* But curiously enough, he would wait for the instruction of women till the men were thoroughly well-educated first. I suppose the turbulent activities of the suffragettes were not in those days much in evidence, or else the Syed would take back to India the same progressive views concerning the rights and duties of women as he did in the case of men. But it is idle to accuse the Syed of hesitancy in the direction of female education, and especially if we remember what formidable obstacles he had to encounter, to win acceptance from



his conservative compatriots even in reference to Western education being imparted to men. But through a spread of higher education among men, the way has been gradually paved for female education, new ideas are gaining ground, the functions of womanhood are gradually gaining ampler recognition, and to-day we see at the anniversaries of Muhammadan Educational Conferences that Muslim ladies hold their meetings not far from where men carry on their deliberations. And it is the merest justice to add that this happy state of things would not have been possible but for the efforts of the enlightened Syed who expected great things from his country and attempted great things for her.

Syed Ahmad was a great admirer of the progressive tendencies discernible among the Bengalis and the Parsees, but he sincerely, though mistakenly, concluded "that their pace is so fast that there is danger of their falling." But he certainly showed signs of being an ideal reformer when he gave vent to his pent-up conviction "that the fatal shroud of complacent self-esteem is wrapt round the Muhammadan community." Another shrewd remark which bore evidence of intellectual penetration related to the secret of Britain's progressive traditions as consisting in scientific and literary works being written in her own language. And in India, he preached season in and season out that philosophic and literary treatises should be translated in the vernaculars of the country as only thus could the ideas be made popular and the language made richer. The Syed was by instincts and temperament, a statesman and could

well grasp fundamentals, ignoring details for the moment.

He watched the movements of his English friends in London, met distinguished people in social intercourse, entered into the spirit of their conversations and drank deep at the fountain of Western ideas. The idea that held his mind as if in a vice was thus epigrammatically expressed by him: "*Unless the education of the masses is pushed on as it is here, it is impossible for a nation to become civilised and honoured.*" And this idea, which only gained a vague and inchoate expression in Syed Ahmad's utterance, later fired the imagination of a highly-disciplined politician like Gokhale, and acquired a forceful expression through his Education Bill, which failed to pass through the Council, but indirectly revolutionised the attitude of government and people alike to the overmastering need for mass education.

Syed Ahmad had a keen eye for the so-called trivial incidents of everyday occurrence. When his landlady's daughter asked for the loan of one of his books on highly controversial religious topics, at a time when she was rather indisposed, the Syed was very much impressed that a lady should, even during a season of sickness, think of acquiring knowledge and of training her mind. "Is it not a matter for astonishment that a woman, when ill, should read with the object of improving her mind? Have you ever seen such a custom in India, in the family of any noble, Nawab, Raja, or man of high family?"

Even the manners and deportment of his chambermaid aroused in him feelings of disappointment over

the backward condition of women then prevailing elsewhere. During his stay in England he formed strong personal friendships and had, ever afterwards, delightful reminiscences of having met the older aristocracy, officials and even the philosopher of Chelsea—Thomas Carlyle. The last-named was specially honoured by Syed Ahmad because of his bold presentation of the greatness of Muhammad.

On his return to India, and indeed long before, he was obsessed by the idea that he must find and collect funds for a college which might do the same service for Muslim young men as the premier universities of Oxford and Cambridge were doing for the youth of England. He had visited these institutions, had had long and profoundly interesting talks with Dons and Professors. But instead of the impressions being dissipated in idle curiosity or excitement, they deepened and struck roots in his mind till the conviction came that a new experiment of a similar nature was urgently needed in India, and that he was the man on whom the burden of responsibility should fall, since it was he on whose mind the idea originally dawned with such force.

A few loyal friends supported Syed Ahmad, when he expressed his intention to educate the youth of the country. But the forces of conservatism arrayed themselves against him. He was roundly condemned as one seeking to uproot the Muslim tradition, a perverse intriguer seeking alliance with the Infidels, as a "lieutenant of the evil one" who did not believe in the story of Adam and Eve, who discarded belief in the tradition that attributes to Muhammad



the cutting of the moon in two and passage through the milky way. The learned Mullahs from Mecca and Medina fulminated their fatawahs (*i.e.*, decrees) against him, putting him without the pale of orthodoxy and branding him as a heretic with whom the faithful should on no account have any dealings. Even attempts at taking his life were threatened. But nothing daunted the Syed fought on with the forces of reaction by gentle exposition, moral suasion and sheer force of character. And he won the day.

Among contributors to the college fund were Hindus and Muhammadans, Government officials, and English friends. Among prominent Indians may be mentioned Sir Salār Jung and Raja Shimbu Narain. Syed Ahmad showed consummate tact and capacity for work, in the matter of collecting friends.

But prior to the establishment of the college, Syed Ahmad and his lieutenants were anxious to ascertain the feelings of the community and to gauge their requirements. So the provisional committee invited some prize essays on why the Muhammadans were educationally so backward. Among reasons assigned in the most thoughtful essays were :

1. The general disinclination of well-to-do parents to let their children associate with boys of humbler birth, and the apathy and lethargy of children brought up in comfortable homes where standards of discipline were not high.

2. Aversion to English education because of the misapprehension that it may undermine the foundations of faith and also resentment because the teach-

ing of Muslim tradition and theology was not included in the curriculum.

3. Neglect of Arabic and Muslim philosophy in English schools : also non-observance of Muhammadan festivals coupled with alleged indifference of Hindu and Christian teachers towards Muhammadan boys.

4. The contempt shown by Muhammadans towards learning and clerical pursuits, and their preference for military careers or lives of ease and indulgence.

It must have been a proud day for Sir Syed Ahmad when Sir William Muir delivered a powerful address on the occasion of the establishment of the college on 12th November, 1875, in the course of which he said :

“ The knowledge of history and of foreign lands will correct views otherwise narrowed by the sole contemplation of what is immediately around, and enable the youth to expatiate on the experience of other ages and of other nations than their own, their minds will be improved by the great discoveries, mechanical and scientific of later times, and their views will be elevated and expanded by contemplation of the works of the creator in the starry heavens and the wonders of nature here on earth.”

Still more eloquent and inspiring was the address of Lord Lytton, then Viceroy of India, who laid the foundation stone of the College on 8th January, 1877, and in the course of his address said :

“ You will, I am sure, be the last to admit that anything in the creed of Islām is inconsistent with intellectual culture. The greatest and most enduring conquests of the Muhammadan races have

all been achieved in the fields of literature, science and art. Not only have they given to a great portion of this continent an architecture which is still the wonder and admiration of the world, but in an age when the Christian societies of Europe had barely emerged out of intellectual darkness and social barbarism, they covered the whole Iberian peninsula with schools of medicine, of mathematics and philosophy, far in advance of all contemporary science ; and to this day the populations of Spain and Portugal for their very sustenance are mainly dependent on the past labours of Moorish engineers. . . . The modern culture of the West is now in a position to repay the great debt owed by it to the early wisdom of the East."

In 1903, there were 703 pupils in the College of whom 531 are boarders, in the year 1918 the number of students enrolled exceeds 1,200.

The *Pioneer* of Allahabad expressed the view in its leading article of 8th January, 1876, that

"The ceremony which takes place to-day at Aligarh marks the great progress already made by one of the most thoroughly sound and progressive movements ever set on foot for the advancement of Indian education. The name of Syed Ahmad Khān, the principal promoter of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, will be held in grateful remembrance in the future by large masses of his countrymen, who may as yet hardly appreciate the importance of the influence he has brought to bear upon their intellectual and political development. The rising college bids far to be a real force in this country, and



its expansion is guaranteed by the fact that it is entirely spontaneous in its growth—the fruit, that is to say, of purely native sagacity and determination, in no way an exotic institution, planted by Government and watered by official favour.”

Syed Ahmed published a series of essays on the life of Muhammad in 1870. He was very fond of combating, by means of persuasive arguments, the assumption of western scholars that Islam was a religion that strove to propagate itself with the help of the sword. “The remark that the sword is the inevitable penalty for the denial of Islām,” he would say, “is one of the gravest charges falsely imputed to this faith by professors of other religions, and arises from the utter ignorance of those that make the accusation. Islām inculcates and demands a hearty and sincere belief in all that it teaches; and that genuine faith which proceeds from a person’s heart not by force or violence. Judicious readers will not fail to observe that the above-quoted remark is entirely contrary to the fundamental principles of the Moslem faith, wherein it is inculcated in the clearest language possible: ‘Let there be no forcing in religion, the right way has been clearly made distinguishable from the wrong one.’ ”

The Syed was very much under the influence of Wahabis whom he strove to defend from bigoted partisan attacks, and who believed in the immediate access of the soul to God, and repudiated miracles, priestcraft and saint-worship.

The Aligarh College has had the good fortune of securing the services of such eminent Anglo-Indians

as Dr. T. W. Arnold, the learned author of "The Preaching of Islam" and at present secretary to Indian students, at the India Office in Whitehall; Mr. Theodore Beck, and Sir Theodore Morison late of the Council of India, and author of the "Economic Transition in India" and other Books.

His college has been sending out a continuous stream of cultured Muhammadan gentlemen, and has been a centre of attraction for Moslems from the various parts of the world, including Mombasa and Zanzibar. And surely the Hindu-Muhammadan entente of to-day, which is the evidence of wholesome political growth in India, could not be possible save for the enlightenment of the Moslem youth, for, beyond doubt, education is the sheet anchor of political aspirations.

## VI

### DADABHOY NAOROJI

(1821-1917)

THE distinctive value of Naoroji's services to India arises from the fact of his membership of the Parsee community, which though commercially enterprising, has assumed, from time to time, an attitude of aloofness from Indian political demands. Nor is this greatly to be wondered at. Ever since their escape from Persia, owing to bitter religious persecutions, the Parsees have discovered in the stability of the British Government and in its policy of religious neutrality, a guarantee of success in commerce and of tolerance in matters of religion. And throughout their domicile in India as British subjects their extreme religious conservatism, habits of social exclusiveness and the profession of an alien faith, that with all its beautiful teachings has not much surface kinship with either Hinduism or Islām, has tended to drive them apart from the two great sister communities in India. It is quite probable, further, that intensive specialisation in business and commercial activities has, in the community as such, atrophied the political fervour which springs from altruistic idealism.



But though the community as such has so far failed to evolve a political organisation, and to declare the harmony of its ideals with those of the more progressive ones, yet it has contributed to the National cause in India, men of outstanding intellectual vigour and political enthusiasm. Names like those of the late Sir Pheroz Shah Mehta, of Sir Dinshaw Edulji Wacha and of B. P. Wadia, of the Home Rule for India League, are names to conjure with in political India. And we may in passing just casually mention that India's gratitude for Mr. B. P. Wadia's services has been greatly enhanced by his internment, some months ago, for his strenuous activities in connection with Mrs. Annie Besant's recently launched Home Rule propaganda.

Among the Nation-builders which this community has produced, Dadabhai Naoroji stands head and shoulders above the most enlightened and patriotic of his countrymen. It is to his lasting credit that during his Presidential Address at the Indian National Congress at Calcutta in 1907, he for the first time formulated and expressed the ideal of Home Rule, an ideal which till then was quite alien to the constitutional schemes adopted.

He tells us of his earlier experiences at school, when it was a matter of comparative indifference to his teachers what the boys did with their time or studies. In fact, the two English teachers of the School in Bombay which Naoroji attended had quite enough on hand by way of composing their own differences, to discourage their "haymaking" or playing truant. But in spite of this lax discipline, Naoroji

would always manage to come out "top" and with a naïve, almost childish, simplicity, he tells us of how he would get the plaudits of the crowd, while repeating aloud the long multiplication tables, in those days a favourite exercise in mental gymnastics, or while marching in procession or attending social gatherings, in his brilliant, gold-embroidered gala dress. Some of these school-time memories stood out so vividly in his mind that when in 1893, he formed one of the Deputation of the Imperial Institute that was to wait on Queen Victoria, he was at once reminded of the associations of early manhood in Bombay.

From very early years, Naoroji formed habits of temperance and sobriety and till the day of his death was a staunch supporter of the Anglo-Indian Temperance propaganda. A very trifling incident determined his conversion to teetotalism. It was the constant practice in his home that they should take some wine before the evening meal commenced. One evening, the supply of wine ran out and Dadabhoy's mother sent the boy round the corner, to fetch some from the nearest "pub." The boy felt so abashed and humiliated that he should enter a place which he regarded, in spite of his wine-bibbing habits, as disreputable, that he solemnly resolved never to touch the "accursed drink!"

His mother's influence, likewise, helped him in acquiring habits of chaste and refined speech, when he was quite a little boy, and he had a horror of hearing profane language used by schoolfellows and others, always reminding them, whenever occasion

arose, that their improper language "would return unto them." This in itself may sound rather prosaic, since the acquiring of this habit is encouraged in all decent homes, being considered an essential preliminary to good upbringing. But in Naoroji's case his habits of temperate speech left an imprimatur on all his political utterances, later in life, so that we shall look in vain, had we time enough to ransack his voluminous speeches, for a single outburst of uncontrolled emotion, or irritability in temper. The gentlemanly instincts early ingrained in his character, seldom forsook him during the fiery ordeals of later life ; and in Naoroji's case it has been a militant life throughout ; fighting now for the spread of education in his country ; now for the brushing aside of racial and political discriminations ; and then again for the inauguration of a policy of conciliation and trust.

Naoroji came of a poor but highly respectable family, and were it not for the generosity of the Camas—another Parsee family—in supplying him with books, and even at times helping towards the payment of his fees, Naoroji would have been deprived of his education, and thus hindered from being the bulwark of strength to the Indian cause. The realisation that poverty may, in numerous instances, prove a formidable bar to equipping oneself for the severe discipline of life, assumed in Naoroji the force of an irresistible conviction, in no wise diminished, even when his career marked the zenith of successful achievement, by the comforting thought that in his own case the kindness of friends helped him tide over



many a difficulty. In fact, throughout his long and honourable career, almost overcrowded with varied and assiduous activities, Naoroji maintained an attitude of uncompromising democratic zeal, striving to open out wider opportunities for the less favoured, championing the cause of "the submerged tenth" fighting pitched battles on the parliamentary back bench, on the public platform and in the sanctum of intimate friendships, for the amelioration of the lot of the overtaxed peasantry, for the elimination of poverty and illiteracy among India's countless and dumb millions, for the removal of social and political stigmas branded on the foreheads of India's intellectuals, and for the general softening of harsh and severe conditions. The main power that impelled and drove forward his activities was the intense conviction that a bureaucratic government, alien or indigenous, failed to create the environment where talent and genius could come into their own : and on the other hand it reinforced every reactionary influence that suppressed self-realisation and overburdened with a crushing weight the undeveloped powers of a nation's manhood. We referred above to Naoroji's fighting pitched battles : we may, perhaps, add that he fought these with the coolness of an experienced general that had surveyed the entire situation before him, and with the daring and dash of a trained soldier.

From school the transition to collegiate life at Elphinstone College was made easy by Naoroji's winning a scholarship. On taking his B.A. final with honours, Dadabhai did not experience great

difficulty in securing an assistant professorship at his Alma Mater, which later led to a full-blown professorship at that historic institution. In all his attempts he was considerably assisted by Sir Erskine Perry and a Professor of the same college. Sir Erskine, the principal, was so much struck by Dadabhai's integrity, intelligence and mastery of the English language, that before Dadabhai's graduation he offered to be responsible for half the expenses requisite for Dadabhai's education for the English Bar, provided his parents could arrange for the raising of the other half. But in those days the prevailing panic was, and this was shared by Dadabhai's parents to an extraordinary degree, that a visit to England might result in the youth's conversion to Christianity. So the project was hung up for a season, and then ultimately dropped so far as the parents were concerned.

During under-graduate days, and perhaps earlier while at school, Dadabhai would, like Gokhale, snap at English classics and read them with great avidity. He was also tremendously interested in books on travel and adventure, and in thrilling anecdotes of heroism and philanthropy. Thus the lives of the pioneers of the Slavery Abolition movement, lives like those of William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson and Zachary Macaulay exercised a great fascination over a mind so wonderfully amenable to appeals of human tragedy and so sensitive to the demands of suffering humanity. The perusal of these biographies fired his imagination, and set his life aglow with many a fixed resolve. And

it is common knowledge to-day that never did patriot or reformer ever apply himself to seemingly impossible tasks with sterner determination or haughtier defiance of the barriers that strewn the pathway to achievement. At the same time it is instructive to observe that Naoroji was at no time of his life an idle visionary, nor ever did he undertake to achieve what lay beyond the zone of accomplishment in the history of more favoured countries.

When some years later Dadabhai interviewed Sir Erskine Perry, while the latter held an appointment at the India Office, in Whitehall, Dadabhai was quite convinced, as was his erstwhile principal, that the fiasco of the earlier years had only broadened the avenues of useful service to his country, and that a lawyer's career, however lucrative, would have greatly curbed his enthusiasm for service and confined his sphere of influence.

Before coming to England, however, Dadabhai had striven to the best of his ability to launch new and rather ambitious schemes for the improvement of the standards of teaching efficiency in the existing schools, for establishing a large number of schools where English must be the medium of instruction, for female education leading to the fuller emancipation of women, for floating new journalistic ventures advocating religious and social reform. Dadabhai was thus prompted by his reforming instincts in all the various spheres of his life-work, for he saw the utter futility of dreaming new dreams, without developing the corresponding capacity for setting



one's house in order, or developing those aptitudes without which mere political ambitions only foster a vague discontent. He clearly foresaw with the vision of a prophet, that gross abuses had crept into his own community, by reason of the obscurantist leadership of ignorant priests and general social and moral helplessness. He was fortunate in securing the loyal co-operation of eminent Parsee progressives, but it is the merest justice to Dadabhai to say that he himself was, from their very inception, the chief guiding spirit of these reforms. The paper called "Rast Guftar" owes its origin mainly, if not exclusively to Dadabhai's efforts, and this paper has always maintained an attitude of unflinching criticism of religious and social anomalies in the community and political in the government.

During his long residence in England, his professional connection with Messrs. Cama and Co., the first Parsee house of business established in this country did not damp his ardour for political service : it only quickened his eagerness to secure the redress of Indian grievances and to get the British democracy interested in India's vital needs. It was through his powerful presentation of the Indian case in Parliament, that the famous Welby Commission of 1886 was appointed to investigate Indian finance and expenditure. Very little by way of substantial reform was achieved through the various recommendations embodied in the Commission's report : in fact most of the recommendations covered elaborate side-issues of technique and method, and skilfully evaded the broad, main issues that

required to be handled. But it will remain to Naoroji's perpetual credit, that he, in his capacity as Liberal M.P. (for Central Finsbury), did make a heroic attempt to move the authorities, in the face of powerful vested interests, to press in the right direction. Throughout his parliamentary career he was entirely engrossed in securing sympathy for and interest in the various schemes of reform, fully known to Congress reformers.

It was through his able and unyielding championship of Indian rights that the competition for the Indian Civil Service was, for the first time thrown open to Indians.

During his residence in England, he made many notable friendships with renowned publicists like Bradlaugh and Bright, and famous statesmen like Gladstone and the Duke of Argyll. His statements on Indian questions were couched in such dignified and accurate terms, that they compelled the sympathy of friends and commanded the respect of opponents. He never appealed to the baser elements of human nature, but based his appeals or demands on facts, and then issued them to the generous impulses, the chivalrous instincts of his hearers, whatever their political persuasion. His faith in the triumph of the cause that he was espousing always remained unshaken, only reinforced by dangers that so often threatened, and deferred hopes.

It was mainly through the combined influence of Dadabhai Naoroji and of that of the unconquerable spirit of Charles Bradlaugh, that the famous House of Commons Resolution was passed in 1886, recom-

mending the holding of simultaneous examinations, for all branches of Imperial Services, both in England and India. It is true that this resolution was almost contemptuously set aside by Sir Stafford Northcote, then Secretary of State for India, but we can form some estimate of the magnetic power that was responsible at least for the passage of the historic resolution through the House of Commons, usually too preoccupied with the pressure of domestic concerns, and especially irresponsible—and almost empty—on the day the East India estimates come up for discussion. We do not know whether during his parliamentary career or earlier he in any way influenced Mrs. Annie Besant's attitude towards India, especially as the latter was then so closely co-operating with Bradlaugh on various democratic platforms. In any case, it is obvious that the two frequently compared notes on Indian matters, and that the nomination of Dadabhai Naoroji as Honorary President of the Bombay branch of the Home Rule for India League, was the result of a genuine appreciation by Mrs. Besant of the sterling qualities of leadership found in such conspicuous measure in the earliest apostle of Home Rule for India.

Among the noble succession of Indian politicians and statesmen, it would be hard to find one so broad in his democratic outlook, and so solicitous for the well-being of the masses. Politics with Naoroji were never a fad or a hobby, but the most effective method of promoting the best interests of his country. Yet he was no sectarian or narrow-minded nationalist.



True, that he wanted Indians to rise to the full dignity of emancipated manhood, and was overpowered with grief when he saw the Intelligentsia as "merely drawers of water and hewers of wood." But still his burning desire to promote Indian nationality was due to the still more potent conviction that only thus could she take an honourable place in the comity of nations.

Dadabhai Naoroji's private life was just as much above reproach as his public life was above the suspicion of self-interest, insincerity and compromise. It was his life-long conviction that absolute purity in personal life was essential to the efficient discharge of public duties and responsibilities as patriot or nation-builder. This might sound rather puritanic in an age when moral sanctions are looked upon as of subsidiary importance, even by those plunged in the onerous duties of political life. Dadabhai considered a compromise, say on the temperance question as fatal and fatuous as surrender on the Home Rule issue. His long and fully occupied life presents as perfect an embodiment as is humanly speaking possible of the principle that sanity of mind depends on the unimpaired vitality of the physique, and that intensive devotion to noble pursuits demands the surrender of lower standards and baser occupations.

When in March, 1917, the Grand Old Man of India was gathered to his fathers, there was profound and universal grief felt, not only all over Bombay, by the melancholy event, but throughout the length and breadth of India. Political India

especially was draped in deep mourning, for the ablest and most advanced of her sons was no more. The death was deplored not only by politicians, but by officials, secretaries of learned and reform societies: by the king on his throne to the beggar on the street.

During the war Naoroji preached as vigorously as possible loyalty to the Empire that was locked in a life-and-death struggle, and which with all the failings of its lesser representatives, was really the guardian of freedom and civilisation, in essence and intention; if not always, to outward appearance, in actual attainment.

The influence of Naoroji's life and work will last until India enters on her full inheritance, the vision of which was so clearly seen and so lucidly stated by this prophet of Indian autonomy.

When in 1886 he put up for the parliamentary candidature for Holborn, Lord Salisbury sneered at the "black man" seeking election and being feted at the National Liberal Club. And the irony of the remark consists in the fact that Dadabhai Naoroji, was much fairer than Lord Salisbury, and had venerable features of classic dignity. Mr. Ratcliffe, the well-known journalist, told us only recently that Lord Salisbury's son used to be highly amused why his father should address Naoroji of all others, by this designation.

His death in 1917, was very deeply and widely lamented. Governors and high officials generally sent messages of condolence to the bereaved family. Sir William Wedderburn presided at a large meeting

held in Caxton Hall, in London, to pay a tribute to the memory of such an illustrious son of India. Among the moderate politicals of India none came up to Naoroji in point of unblemished private life and irreproachable public career, stimulated by high impersonal aims.



## VII

### SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

(1862—4th July, 1902)

“ His doctrine was no academic system of metaphysics, of purely historic and linguistic interest, but the heart's faith of a living people, who had struggled continuously for its realisation, in life and in death, for twenty-five centuries . . . he stood for work without attachment, or work for impersonal ends, as one of the highest expressions of the religious life.”—MISS MARGARET NOBLE.

“ Remember ! Remember ! the message of India is always ‘ Not the soul for nature, but nature for the soul.’ ”

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

“ Forgive, when you also can bring legions of angels to an easy victory.”—*Ibid.*

“ What the world wants to-day is twenty men and women who can dare to stand in the street yonder and say that they possess nothing but God. Who will go ? ”—*Ibid.*

THE main reason for including the Swami's life-work in these biographical sketches is that though he was especially fond of metaphysics and religious speculation, no one has striven more nobly to modernise the general tone of life in India. It is more than probable that some of the influences operative in his character were imbibed during his school days and when he was studying at a missionary college in Calcutta. But the supreme crisis in his life came when he was on a lecturing tour in America. He had frequent interviews with men of light and leading ;

studied the methodical habits of the people and their capacity for practical tasks ; saw the condition of women's education and the organisation of medical facilities, and was impressed with the spirit of co-operation obtaining in Western countries. So it is not surprising that we find him in India, an ardent supporter of women's education and the champion of the masses. Though he never swerved one inch from his central conviction that India's message to the world is in the realm of religion, he fully appreciated that life in Western countries was more progressive because of love of freedom, education and co-ordination of effort.

It is noteworthy that scientific inventions like wireless telegraphy or even the art of navigation struck his mind as appropriate media for the spread of spiritual ideals. He was fully conscious that the dreams of the Buddhist Emperor Asoka to federate humanity on a spiritual basis could not materialise because of lack of facilities for travel and absence of scientific inventions.

But on his second visit to America, he felt that in the heart of Western civilisation slumbered a volcano, and behind great commercial activities was the intoxication of power, love of greed and exploitation of the weak and the poor. This confirmed his previous impression—hence his message : “ Materialism and all its miseries cannot be conquered by materialism. Armies, when they attempt to conquer armies, only multiply and make brutes of humanity.

. Spirituality must conquer the West. . . .  
Now is the time to work for India's spiritual ideas

penetrating deep into the West. . . . We must go out. We must conquer the world through our spirituality and philosophy. We must do it or die. The condition of Indian national life, of unashamed and vigorous national life is the conquest of the world by Indian thought."

It was at the Chicago Parliament of Religions held in 1893, that Narendra Nath Dutt—the Swami's name before he entered on an ascetic life—first received European recognition for interpreting to the West what he conceived to be the best in Hindu thought and ideals, in modern language. His main contribution to the discussions then carried on, may thus be summed up :

1. God is "impersonal" so far as an ultimate analysis of His being is concerned, for since, in his essence, He is superior to spatial limitation or temporal sequence, He cannot be located in space or limited by time. At the same time, to the individual believer, who has focussed his attention on some aspect of His Being, in his desire to visualise His nature and let it be a source of inspiration for his personal needs, God is "personal." But this is a lower degree of "realisation." To the initiated the Divinity is the Reality that pervades the whole Universe and is operative in human thought as well as in the evolution of the Universes. In that mighty consciousness slumbers the mysteries of the worlds and the secrets of human development.

2. Being and Becoming are different aspects of the same reality and are only relative to our intelligence. Man has the promise and potentiality of divine



realisation, of spiritual perfection and *therefore is God in the making*, for even his humanity is intelligible only if regarded as an individualised self-expression of God. It is derogatory to human nature, therefore, to attribute sin to man. Besides, God being the sole and supreme Reality, how could a foreign element like *sin* invade the sanctuary of being? "The Hindus refuse to call you sinners: Ye, divinities on earth, sinners! It is a sin to call man so! It is a standing libel on human nature." (from the Swami's address at the Parliament of Religions). On another occasion he wrote: "The sages who wrote the Vedas were preachers of principles. Now and then their names are mentioned, but that is all. We do not know who or what they were. At the same time, just as our God is an impersonal and yet a personal one, so our religion is a most intensely impersonal one, and yet has an infinite scope for the play of persons."

3. The claim of Hinduism to be the universal religion is that it preaches *principles* and does not demand loyalty to *persons*. As for religions that have gathered round the personality of some individual, "smash the historicity of the man, and the religion tumbles to the ground. The glory of Krishna was not that he was a Krishna, but that he was a teacher of Vedanta."

4. Since God is all and all is God, the world perceived by the senses is of an illusory nature, the only true world or state of being is that of intuitive realisation of spiritual reality, which is the recognition of the soul's identity with the Ultimate

Reality called Brahma. According to this hypothesis the Ideal and the Real merge into one and all discriminations are brushed aside between Being and Becoming. It falls beyond the scope of this book to offer criticisms of the above statements. We can only say in passing that side by side with vigorous and bold thinking, there is serious confusion of issues and impatience with reducing the ideas to a system. The Swami's ideas have not been reduced to a coherent system, but are brilliant flashes of genius alternating with mere verbal jugglery and empty flourishes of rhetoric.

5. The East is profoundly spiritual and religious, the West profoundly practical and political, but in the main, irreligious and materialistic. Both have to learn a great deal from each other. The Swami's great ambition was to set up a commerce in ideas between the East and the West, analogous to the exchange of commodities between the nations. He would say: "Send a ship-load of doctors and teachers out to India, and we shall send you missionaries of religion." He would also say: "For clear thinking and sound idealism the Greeks; for efficiency, business reliability and the love for personal and national freedom the English; but for audacity in religious thinking and for philosophical acumen the Indians."

6. He had a bold vision of a spiritual federation of humanity, heedless of caste, colour and creed. He was grievously disappointed at the treatment meted out to the negroes in America. Once or twice he was himself mistaken for a negro; but he did not express

any resentment, accepted with great enthusiasm the hospitality of negroes, who acclaimed him as their great leader, and expressed pride that he should achieve such distinction as a member of their race ! When his American friends apologised, he resumed friendship as if nothing had happened, and prophesied a great future for the despised race.

7. The fundamental unity of mankind he perceived in the central fact of the common relation all bore to the Immanent Life. He had great veneration for Christ and spoke of Him as " a disembodied, unfettered soul." He would ever and anon speak of the " Christ in you," the " kingdom of heaven in your heart " and so on.

8. But finally his lasting achievement was to infuse a spirit of active philanthropy and social co-operation into an individualistic scheme of abstract philosophy. He called it " practical vedantism " or New Vedantism, the idea being that reunion with the Divine Life is best accomplished through selfless service and devotion to man.

On his return from America he launched a most ambitious scheme of reforms. Miss Margaret Noble tells us that his desire was to spread a net-work of schools, monasteries, hospitals and philanthropic institutions for which he wanted £20,000,000. But the support given, even by those who lost their heads in unstinted praise of him, was at best very meagre and grudging. Still he succeeded in founding the Rama Krishna Mission in connection with which there is a monastery for training ascetics, who engage in active philanthropic service, at Belur near Calcutta,



another at Mayavati near Almora, and the third in Madras. All these Vivekananda founded on his return from America. There are five institutions for affording medical relief to pilgrims in Benares, Cawnpore, Allahabad, Murshidabad and Madras which have sprung up entirely as the result of his efforts.

The last three decades of the nineteenth century initiated an epoch of renascent self-respect and sense of national dignity in India. We do not suggest thereby that the political consciousness was then fully developed, or a sense of national solidarity in the modern acceptation of the term, but only that among the Hindus, *a pride in their past* became a dominant consciousness, and especially pride in their religious achievements in the past. This was in part due to the rediscovery of India's philosophical and religious heritage through the patient and elaborate researches of Western orientalists into India's ancient religions and schools of philosophy. The late Professor Max Müller of Oxford laid the world of scholarship under a deep obligation by publishing his well-known commentaries on the Hymns of the Rig Veda between 1845 and 1879. The discovery of Sanskrit and a prolonged study thereof by European *savants*, and of the marvellous treasures buried in its ancient literature, coupled with the recognition that Sanskrit was a suitable vehicle of expression for the subtlest and profoundest of ideas, revolutionised the science of language in Europe. It is, no doubt, true that Sir William Jones published in 1789 a translation of *Sakuntala*, an Indian drama written by Kalidasa

who may aptly be described as the Shakespeare of India. Likewise, Warren Hastings ordered a translation and codification of Hindu laws and customs in 1776, and Prinsep and Cunningham did pioneer work in Indian epigraphy, art, and literature. But these achievements of Western scholars did not arouse the Indian imagination to the splendours of the past nor stimulate, till later, that intense, passionate reverence for Indian traditions and pride in their hoary antiquity, which is a prominent characteristic of the awakened Indian mind to-day. In the early seventies of the last century, however, fixed ideas and obsessions in reference to India's mental and moral degeneracy were replaced by a dawning sense of pride and independence, and people began to feel for the first time since the British advent into India, that whatever the accidents of the political connection, India had every right to hold her head high, in the sphere of intellect and religion, as an inheritor of immortal renown, and instead of despising her heritage, to treasure it as of unique value, as something that constituted her birth-right to occupy a foremost place of honour in contemporary and ancient civilisations.

We have referred to the researches of Western scholars. These were an important element in fostering a new self-confidence and veneration for India. But there were other influences, powerful and almost revolutionary, at work which brought about the new mentality. In the chapter on Ram Mohan Roy, we have dwelt at some length on the splendid pioneer work he did by his agitation for the

abolition of suttee, for better treatment of women, for a general diffusion of knowledge through schools, and mainly through his establishing the Brahma Samāj in 1828. The reclamation of Hinduism from grossly immoral and degrading customs was in itself a very potent influence for good, even though the Brahma Samāj did not then, as it does not even now, capture the adherence of the masses. But the foundations of vigorous reforms were laid through the heroic efforts and zeal of the Raja and his noble band of colleagues and the way was thus opened for social amelioration and religious reform. The decadent, rigid, hide-bound orthodoxy before and in his day, left hardly much room for hope or movement, and but for the audacious spirit and vision of the Raja the remarks of Abbé Dubois and Meredith Townsend would have been found to ring true to-day : Dubois said : “ I venture to predict that the British Government will attempt in vain to effect any very considerable changes in the social condition of the people of India, whose character, principles, customs and ineradicable conservatism will always present insurmountable obstacles ” (Dubois : “ Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies,” p. 23). And Meredith Townsend : “ . . . if the English departed or were driven out they would leave behind them as the Romans did in Britain, splendid roads, many useless buildings, an increased weakness in the subject people, and a memory which in a century of new events would be extinct.” (“ Asia and Europe,” p. 27).

The developments which took place in the period



roughly covered by the life-time of Swami Vivekananda say from 1870 or thereabouts to 1904, point at least to one enduring benefit that has accrued from the impact of East and West in India. In spite of the loss of political independence, India, weighted under the crushing weight of alien occupation, has reasserted her soul, has rediscovered her past, and is thus fired with new and proud ambitions for the future.

Over and above the establishment of the Brahma Samāj in Bengal and later the founding of the Prarthana Samāj in Bombay, we must mention the vigorous iconoclasm of the Arya Samaj, founded originally in Bombay, but later removed to Lahore, bearing on its numerous activities, and many-sided propaganda the impress of the strong, virile and aggressive personality of its founder, Swami Daya Nanda Saraswati, whose life-work has been sketched in another chapter in the present volume. The movement stands on unquestioning faith in the infallibility of the Vedas, and lays special stress on the desirability of having a national religion resting on Hindu foundations. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of the Arya Samaj in fostering a spirit of sturdy independence and in summoning the people to take the initiative in religious and social reform, while preserving their loyalty to Vedic tradition instead of priding themselves on the imitation of western modes of thought or culture, and completely breaking away from the Indian continuity. Beyond doubt, whatever be the limitations of this movement, it has served to promote indepen-

dence and discouraged the people from helpless dependence on what Western civilisation stands for, though it is true that all the elements in the Arya Samāj that make for progress are the result of contact with Western civilisation and Christian ideals.

Another powerful contributory factor to the birth of the spirit to which we have already referred, a spirit which found in Swami Vivekananda an especially forceful expression, has been the teaching of the Theosophical Society, founded by Madame H. P. Blavatsky in New York in 1875, and transferred to Adyār, Madras, in 1879. This is not the time or place to go into a full discussion of what the theosophical movement stands for. Suffice it to say that the most outstanding feature of its propaganda, both in the initial stages under Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky, and later under the still more powerful leadership of Mrs. Annie Besant, has been an insistent and unstinted laudation of things Indian, of holding up Indian culture as essentially pure, spiritual and sublime, and condemnation of Western civilisation, in certain aspects at any rate, as materialistic and degrading. We have prefaced the Swami's life-sketch with a description of the various forces that were operative in the environment into which he was born, though in doing so we have no desire to detract from the individuality of the Swami, his great powers of mind, as also fertility of imagination.

It may be mentioned in passing that the Swami never took to politics as such. At the same time it has to be remembered that he was a convinced nationalist, long before the demands for political

rights in India became articulate, and war cries for national unification became vocal. He believed in a *rapprochement* between Hindus and Muhammadans, partly because of his conviction that all religions had common elements of truth but mainly because he felt that narrow-mindedness was a sin, and that it would enrich the Indian tradition, if peculiarities in religious outlook and various racial characteristics were accepted in a spirit of catholicity which leads one to believe that people may be quite honest in differing from others, that what impresses one as erroneous may to others hold up the mirror of truth, and that variety and 'diversity are signs of life.

But while passing, we may say a few words concerning the great teacher, the influence of whose life and teachings, to a large extent, made Vivekananda.

Some four miles north of Calcutta, Rani Rashmani—a wealthy Bengali lady—had built the famous temple of Dakhineshwar. On 31st May, 1855, as assistant priest of this temple, came a man whose fame and achievements have made the temple of permanent historic interest. That man was Rama Krishna, whose reputation for sanctity, simplicity of life and God-intoxication, brought him adoring disciples from the four corners of India. He would go into ecstasies as he would concentrate his mind on the worship of the goddess Kali, and would for long intervals become quite unconscious while practising Samādhi (*i.e.*, intensive concentration). He would work himself into a frenzy of delight as he



contemplated on the attributes of the Mother, as he called the goddess. It is interesting to note that he used the worship of Kāli as a symbol of the God whom he believed to be pervading all, around him. Professor Max Müller thus characterises his mode of worship : “ He now began to look upon the image of the goddess Kāli as his mother and the mother of the Universe. He believed it to be living and breathing and taking food out of his hand. After the regular forms of worship he would sit there for hours and hours, singing hymns and talking and praying to her as a child to his mother, till he lost all consciousness of the outward world ” (cf. Max Müller : “ Rama Krishna,” p. 57). He practised great austerities and penances, fought long and hard for a complete suppression of the sex-instinct with the result that he absolutely declined to live with his lawfully married wife, who was moved on hearing of her husband's fame to lead a similar life of asceticism. He engaged in similar struggles against the observance of caste distinctions, did all sorts of work usually done by the pariahs, and even ate their cast-off food, accepted priesthood in a temple built by a lady that was not a Brahmin, and worked up such a feeling of revulsion against money and earthly possessions that even while asleep his body would be convulsed if touched with a coin. His prayers for deliverance from sexual passions and from love of money were so earnest and sincere that his words would bring tears to the eyes of his hearers. It is said that he once had a vision of Jesus, and for days after that went into such transports of delight that he would think and talk of

nothing else. He had also the power to induce Samadhi in others, to send them into a hypnotic trance, that is to say, and to attract people to him.

Norendra Nath Dutt, for that was the original name of the hero of this sketch, was born on the 7th of January, 1862, of a Kayastha family in Calcutta. There was nothing very extraordinary about him, in his earlier years, except that he had a sweet, rich voice and was in great demand for singing Bengali hymns, and impressed one as an intelligent boy, gentle and persevering. During his school days he would attend Brahma Samāj meetings and was constantly under the influence of their prevailing ideas. He had a thoroughly good English education and in 1881 took his Bachelor's degree from the Duff College in Calcutta, taking second class honours in philosophy. Later, he took up the study of law, presumably with intent to settle down to a secular life, but finding the study uncongenial, he gave it up. In 1882, he came under the influence of the great ascetic Parmahansa Rama Krishna, whose fame for religious devotion, passionate fervour for the goddess Kali, and complete absorption in meditation and ecstasy, to the entire neglect of temporal needs, had travelled far and wide through Calcutta and other parts of India. His contact with the great Sannyāsi (*i.e.*, recluse) marked the crisis of his life, since from that moment he renounced all secular ambitions and concentrated his mind on the quest after spiritual truth. On the death of Rama Krishna in 1886 Norendra Nath was himself initiated as Sannyāsi and spent about six years in

solitude, in complete retirement from human intercourse ; thinking and contemplating on the mysteries of life.

He travelled far and wide, met saintly and learned men, leading a similar life of renunciation, compared notes on religion in the course of his peregrinations, and is said to have visited parts of Tibet in order to study Buddhism, with the aid of adepts. We find him, at the termination of this prolonged novitiate, resume public life as preacher of Vedantism and attract large audiences by means of his powerful oratory and attractive personality. He had a virile and independent character, and his utterances breathed a spirit of self-reliance and new-born confidence which delighted his hearers and infused new hope in them. He never offered an apology on behalf of India, and was thoroughly convinced that she did not need any, and in fact that it would amount to disgracing the glorious traditions of that time-honoured home of religion and spirituality to attempt to do so. Whatever be the value of his exposition and doctrine, it was quite a unique presentation of Hinduism, proclaiming it as the world's premier religion, as embodying a system of doctrine and an outlook on life that was in its essence profoundly spiritual. Contemporary cultures and religious traditions may have many redeeming qualities, but in point of spiritual perception and intuition into the bases of reality, there was nothing to compare in the annals of religious experiences with the gospel of Vedantism.

This was the message that he dinned into the ears



of his countrymen, exhorting them to be missionaries of the Vedantic faith, to take pride in its sublime teaching, and to realise that this was India's contribution to the philosophical and religious thought of the world. In this he excelled his Master Rama Krishna, who simply preached the harmony of all religions, that there were elements of truth common to all beliefs, and that every one should preserve his loyalty to the faith in which he was born. His famous article of faith ran as follows : " A truly religious man should think that other religions also are paths leading to the truth. . . . Every man should follow his own religion. A Christian should follow Christianity, a Muhammadan should follow Muhammadanism and so on. For the Hindus, the ancient path, the path of the Aryan Rishis is the best." (Max Müller : " Rama Krishna " 153, 177). The special significance of Vivekananda's addresses was that during times when everything Indian was customarily branded as possessing an inferior value, and the enthusiasm of the people in cherishing their ancient heritage was paralysed both by the systematic iconoclasm of a few narrow-minded Christian missionaries and the reforming zeal of bodies like the Brahma Samāj, Vivekananda had the audacity to proclaim Hinduism as a world-ideal, every element of whose teaching must be zealously preserved against the attacks of reformers. His epigrammatic way of expressing this truth was in words, which his English disciple Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret Noble) has preserved for us in " My Master as I saw him," (p. 13.)

“ The old ideas may be all superstition, but within these masses of superstition are nuggets of gold and truth. Have you discovered means by which to keep that gold alone, without any of the dross ? ” Of course, we must remember that when Vivekananda engaged in public activity, the theosophist propaganda was in full swing and the monumental researches of Western orientalists into Vedic and Upanishadic texts and the schools of Hindu philosophy were within the grasp of educated Indians. The West was gradually recognising the claims of ancient Hindu faiths, and a new pride in their past was instilled into the minds of young and old alike by the sympathetic and—to India—highly complimentary conclusions in reference to the treasures of knowledge buried in India's past. Theosophists were, likewise, declaring with a fan-fare of trumpets both the primacy of the Hindu faith and the unique value of its teachings. So it is rather difficult to say, for certain, whether Vivekananda had developed his teachings without being in any way influenced by either of the two powerful agencies operative towards securing a world-recognition for Hinduism. But one thing is certain. Namely, that Vivekananda's English education coupled with a satisfactory knowledge of Sanskrit made him a very able exponent of truths that had gripped his mind and towards the realisation of which extraneous influences may have, indirectly, served as contributory causes.

In 1893, the Parliament of Religions was to be held in Chicago, U.S.A. Many prominent Hindus felt that no abler exponent of the Hindu

faith could be sent over, and accordingly Vivekananda went as an accredited representative. He was indisputably admitted as the greatest personality of all the members of that distinguished assemblage. He rose to heights of eloquence while expounding the inner core of truth in Hinduism and his novel presentation of Hinduism produced a profound impression. The American audiences were swayed by an impulse of uncontrollable appreciation. The New York and other prominent journals rang with a chorus of approbation. India acquired a highly dignified status in the estimation of those who previously had heard only a prejudiced version of her past history. He made a few disciples in America, started a number of Vedanta societies, accepted numerous invitations to engage in lecturing and propaganda work and was acclaimed there as an exceptionally brilliant champion of the Hindu faith. His return to India was a triumphal progress. He received deep homage as one that had vindicated the verities of the Hindu faith, and had thus elevated the dignity of an ancient civilisation in the eyes of the Western world.

To Western readers, all this may convey only a sensational, theatrical effect. But we have seen how the visit to the West broadened the Swami's vision, and though his religious convictions remained unshaken, he acquired a new zeal for social service and organised work of a humanitarian nature.



## VIII

### GOPALA KRISHNA GOKHALE

(1866-1915)

IN the muster-roll of Indian publicists that have nobly served their country, the late Mr. Gokhale occupied a very conspicuous position,—indeed, a position which, if not unequalled, has never been surpassed, by the foremost of his contemporaries. It were idle or at any rate premature to predict, at this stage, of the coming leader of New India, whose attainments and record of service might eclipse Gokhale's unique contributions to the Indian cause. For Gokhale placed on the altar of patriotic duty, not simply his talents, energies and abounding enthusiasm, *but his very all*. Politics were to him not a hobby, to be ridden to death during moments of relaxation from the strenuous duty of piling up riches; nor yet a pastime when other pursuits became cumbersome and boring, to while away the tedium of an aimless existence; but an exalted form of duty which demanded sacrifice and study, and intelligent and continuous interest of a life-time. Politics to Gokhale were coeval with life and religion and the most intimate verities of personal life.

These were, for him, synonymous with useful citizenship and national duty.

Without the slightest attempt at exaggeration it may be said of him that ever since he took his B.A. degree, from Elphinstone College, Bombay, at the early age of eighteen, right up to the date of his retirement practically in 1904, from the professoriate of Fergusson College, Poona, self-dedication to India has been the most dominant motive of his life. And when, in 1906, we see him emerge on the political arena at the termination of his two years' furlough, secured after an uninterrupted educational work for eighteen years, we find the capacity for service and self-sacrifice that was a normal feature of his life, enhanced and intensified. This spirit of self-abnegation never forsook him. At a time when he was at the zenith of fame, having the possibility of lucrative careers well within his grasp, he preferred an arduous sphere with a bare subsistence allowance attached to it, because of his conviction that this sphere would afford wider opportunities for unostentatious service, and because he felt that he would thereby be laying the foundations deep of that spirit of co-operation which is essential to true success in nation-building.

Gokhale kindled a rare enthusiasm in his pupils and taught various subjects, for example, history, mathematics and economics, in the indigenous institution, on whose Board of Control, so to speak, he was himself a distinguished member. The very fact that his services were successfully utilised in the teaching of such diverse subjects bears witness

to his versatility which never compromised his efficient discharge of the duties thrust on him. His colleagues would often chaff him and designate him as "a professor to order" who would step into the breach as emergency arose. He had a fine ear for English style, and would devour with great avidity brilliant master-pieces by English authors of renown. And he was always thorough almost to a fault, in his preparation of lectures and addresses. But though his mental powers were quite capacious and his memory of brilliant retentiveness, the destinies had not ordained that his great successes should be won on the academic battlefield. His services as professor were quite successful, but by no means of unique distinction. He would exercise great discrimination in selecting pupils of exceptional merit for special interest.

His father, who held a small post in Kagal, a state in Kolapur, died when the hero of our sketch was only twelve years old. At the early age of eighteen, Gopalrao had to decide on his life work, having passed his matriculation from the Raja Ram High School in 1881, his "previous" from Raja Ram College in the year following, his first B.A. from the Deccan College in part, and his final B.A. from Elphinstone College, Bombay. So at an age when the minions of fortune are safely cradled behind parental care, and the pampered sons of luxury take a breathing-space before some prosperous berths are found for them, Gokhale was completely thrown on his own resources. But, needless to say, this strenuous discipline bred in him habits of



industry, foresight and self-reliance which did splendid service for him, throughout his life and left its imprint on his personality. It is, of course, true that the hard struggles of his early life somewhat contributed to his premature death, if also to his precocity and mental vigour. But we shall express no great surprise at this, if we bear in mind that, with a few exceptions, most of India's illustrious men have had, since his day and before, to smash their way through adversity.

One word more about his teaching work. It is said that though as professor of English literature he took considerable pains in cultivating in his pupils a desire for correct and luminous style, and took an active interest in debates, recitations and the like, he was at his best when teaching history and more especially economics. From his master, Mahadeva Govinda Ranade, he had learnt how to grasp economic principles and apply them to conditions prevailing in India, thus making the study of economics a matter of lively human interest and national utility. We also learn that Gokhale was very eager in his study of European history, and particularly of English history, because the latter impressed him as neither more nor less than the gradual triumph of democratic struggles, and the slow but sure overthrow of dynastic and oligarchic conceptions. No one could take greater pride in Indian history than he, but somehow he felt depressed to think that there were epochs in Indian history which registered bare chronicles of autocratic beneficence or commercial prosperity or religious triumph, but did not tingle with the keen

zest for the democratic idea whose gradual evolution was to Gokhale the very life-blood of the British constitution.

It is rather unfortunate that his versatility and many-sided activities should serve as a formidable barrier to specialisation in any one department of knowledge. For it must be confessed that Gokhale has left behind him almost nothing, by way of original reflections on Indian economics or fresh impressions of even the history of India, which might serve as a fitting monument to his scholarship and erudition, that were very extensive, though by no means profound. We shall have to modify our regrets, however, when we bear in mind, as well we may, that Gokhale's life was always crammed full of useful and altruistic activities, leaving very limited scope for research or feats of learning. During the time that he was fully engrossed with College work he continued as Secretary of the *Sarvaajanik Society* from 1888 to 1896.

We have referred to Gokhale's appearance on the political arena as taking place somewhere in 1906. By this we only mean his exclusive and whole-time preoccupation with politics. But his political activities carry us to a much earlier date, for we have only to remind ourselves that as early as 1895 Gokhale was nominated as Secretary of the Reception Committee for the Poona Session of the Indian National Congress, and that on the advice of such experts as Ranade and others, he was deputed to give evidence before the Welby Commission in 1896, in the interests of India and, therefore, to a

large extent, as a representative of the Indian Congress.

In 1908 we find him win the greatly coveted distinction of being elected the President of the Congress that held its sitting in Poona ; an honour that lay, in his own mind, quite beyond his fondest dreams as he requested his elders for a seat on the coach-box, when Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji was being driven through Indian streets twelve years earlier. Gokhale has been intimately associated with the Congress almost since its inception in 1884.

He was always an advocate of popular causes, and movements aiming at a larger measure of political emancipation and the betterment of the masses, but not being a demagogue or willing to play to the gallery, he was seldom very popular either among the Intelligentsia that were disappointed because of his constant love of compromise, or among those that were not quite articulate and conscious politically, because of Gokhale's extreme restraint and caution both in his utterances and demands.

Nevertheless, beyond the least shadow of a doubt, Gokhale has fully vindicated his title to be a very influential and prominent tribune of the people. Having broken away from the parochial views and petty bickerings that gather round caste restrictions, narrow religious orthodoxy and petty provincial rivalries, he could not command the same amount of respect and homage that fall to the lot of those that summon the masses to rally round banners emblazoned with popular catchwords. His intellec-



tual pursuits and absorption in the larger, fuller vision of India's future, combined with unceasing endeavour slowly to realise the vision by means of concentrated effort, incapacitated him from untrammelled intercourse with admirers, or critics, which counts a great deal towards popularity in leaders.

We thus always find him studiously dissociating himself from membership of *Gaurakshini Sabhas* (*i.e.*, societies for the protection of cows) or partnership in anti-cow-killing agitations, that perfectly harmless in themselves and even laudable because of the sympathies shown therein to hoary religious traditions, might occasionally be used by political enthusiasts as a powerful leverage for arousing racial animosities. If he believed in eventual self-government for India as the goal of political endeavour, he would prefer that his countrymen worked incessantly, honourably, and hopefully by constitutional means, if possible, in co-operation with the Government, instead of arousing the baser passions of an excitable populace through violent appeals to a divinity of implacable hatred. Lord Morley tells us in his "Recollections" published quite recently (Macmillan and Co.: 25s. net) that in his interviews apropos of the then contemplated Minto-Morley Reforms, Gokhale made no secret of his identification with the demand for full fiscal and political autonomy within the empire, and that he (*i.e.*, Lord Morley), was equally frank in his repudiation of the idea as then lying beyond the region of practical politics. The said "Reforms" being then

on the anvil, Lord Morley tells us that he invited Gokhale to co-operate with him by offering suggestions and advice. And never was co-operation more prolific of better results or more honourable in its professed aims. But to quote Morley's exact words: "I had a farewell talk with Gokhale. . . . On the whole his tone both attracted and impressed me. He promises very confidently a good reception for our Reforms by the Congress. . . . But whether dealing with Parnell, Gokhale, or any other of the political breed, I have a habit of taking them to mean what they say until and unless I find out a trick. Parnell always so long as we were friends or allies, treated me perfectly honourably. . . . Mr. Gokhale is to stay in London until the end of the session, and I am in good hopes of finding him a help to me, and not a hindrance, in guiding the strong currents of democratic feeling that are running breast high in the House of Commons. ("Recollections," pp. 171, 286, 321).

We are now referring to the events that passed with such dramatic rapidity in the course of the year 1909. India was then seething with political excitement and vague hopes of a more promising future. There were sporadic outbreaks of uncontrollable feeling, but not of any appreciable magnitude to alarm level-headed statesmen, at the helm of affairs. Those were feelings of disappointment over pledges that lay unredeemed and brilliant flourishes of rhetoric that led neither to political reform worth mentioning nor even to amelioration of the sad lot of the peasantry and the masses.

The ground-down peasantry were overburdened with new—and in a measure oppressive—impositions in the Chenab Canal Colony. The volume of discontent was swelling because of the sad havoc caused by the repeated visitations of plague and famine, whose memories still lingered and rankled in the minds of prince and peasant alike ; 50,000,000 people carried away, in a little over two decades, by famine and plague alone, in spite of famine-relief operations and the discovery of the rat-flea ! So much for the masses. As for the educated classes, their minds were being burdened, tortured, driven forward by new ambitions concerning India. They were dreaming dreams and seeing visions. Some saw India exalted on a temple-throne. Others thought of the honourable place she was destined to take among the nations. But the actual realisation bore no analogy to the dreams or the tragic suffering mentally endured by those in whose blood burned the consuming fires of patriotism or whose imaginations were electrified by Japan's astounding victories over Russia, as if these were symbols that Asia's age-long secular slavery to Europe was coming to an end. Before Lord Minto's assumption of Viceroyalty, it was young India's misfortune to be saddled with a Viceroy, ablest no doubt among any on whose shoulders the burden of government has fallen, and possessing great capacity for work, but impatient of new ideals that throbbed in the heart of new India ; imperious and dictatorial to a degree ; disdainful of public opinion and with political vision tainted with the worst ideals of



unscrupulous imperialism. It is hardly necessary to mention the name of this distinguished individual. Never before or since has Indian self-respect been more remorselessly crushed or legitimate Indian ambitions more contemptuously scouted. When a history of the repressive measures directed against the nascent sense of nationhood in India comes to be written surely a whole page must be dedicated to this chauvinistic viceroy, who in other respects, has no doubt rendered remarkable services to India.

It is to Gokhale's credit that passing through the ordeals of these highly critical and trying times, and sharing, to a large degree, the experiences and emotions that were pulsating in the breasts of his countrymen, he never let fall one word from his lips that might be construed as a counsel of despair, nor encouraged another to send round a word that might unlock the floodgates of passion and rancour. He seldom broke faith or went back on his word, unless he was convinced that he had taken a false step or the facts on which he relied were tainted at their source or misinterpreted in the heat of the moment.

It is true that at the Surat Congress of 1906, he condemned the lettres de cachet issued by Lord Curzon as reminiscent of Aurangzeb's severity, and that, moreover, he fully upheld and supported the now historic resolution on boycott of Lancashire goods. But in all this, we see no divergence from his normal behaviour. He would always urge the adoption of mild and moderate measures until the resources of human patience were exhausted, and he

saw no ground for hope that the authorities were likely to yield to the reasonable and persistent pressure of moderate appeal. Besides, in his economic creed he was a convinced and consistent protectionist, as most Indian capitalists and publicists are, and from his place in the Imperial Council his speeches urged the abolition of excise duty on Indian cotton. But under the tension of those times, the transition from a mild form of protection for nascent industries to the wholesale boycott of all goods of foreign origin, was very much accelerated by the trying episodes of the Curzonian *régime*. Besides, the sentiments he then expressed were not so much individual as one of a group of related convictions that heralded the advent of a new industrial India.

Mr. M. K. Gandhi has been, no doubt, the veteran protagonist of the rights of Indian Labour in the colonies of the Empire. And it is only for the last few years, since the outbreak of war, that he has retired, having won the brightest laurels open to meritorious and effective service of a patriotic nature. His propaganda, organised as it was, of passive resistance, achieved partial success occasionally when appeals and entreaties appeared futile and the pressure, reluctantly exerted by Home authorities was quietly ignored or speciously explained away. But it must be here recorded that though Mr. Gandhi was the veteran leader *on the spot*, Mr. Gokhale was an equally earnest and convinced advocate of the grievances of Indentured Labour in the Council Chamber, nor must it be forgotten that on his election to the Viceregal Council, after the inauguration of the

Minto-Morley Reforms, the first brilliant speech that he delivered, and which was conspicuous for its reasonableness and masterly presentation of facts, was one that eloquently and with great emotion championed the cause of the Indian labourer, whose indignities and oppressions make very sad reading.

Just as memorable was the visit arranged by the Indian Government for the purpose of enabling him to make personal investigations on the spot in South Africa. Gokhale on his arrival there was received with the utmost cordiality and respect by Generals Botha, Smuts and others, was given every facility for studying the facts for himself, and for the due investigation of the phenomena concerned. Even those who suggest that the warm and enthusiastic reception given him by the South African Government, and the honour and confidence bestowed on him by the Home Government led him to make a dangerous compromise at least in theory, in respect of the right of free entry enjoyed by all British subjects into any colony of the Empire, will have to concede that an inch of solid advance made in fact is preferable, to say the least about it, to a mile of problematic advance in theory. Gokhale must be fully conscious that the right to migrate to and from component parts of the Empire was the potential birthright of his countrymen. But he was also aware of the disturbing fact that public opinion in the colony was not amenable to philosophical considerations, that racial prejudice existed, that the composite character of the population there complicated matters still more, and that



even among European colonists there were people in different stages of civilisation ; and finally that such embarrassing considerations as differences in standards of comfort, and racial characteristics, could not be revolutionised by a stroke of the pen or a single word of mouth. So he welcomed the opportunities where his mediation could bear fruit, and instead of wasting time on an academic discussion of the rights of British citizenship, which might only exist on paper, he tried to improve the situation enough to cause immediate relief, even though the difficulties and disabilities that yet remain afford plentiful material for the exercise of bold statesmanship, and the sustaining of organised agitation on the part of leaders and followers alike. We see in all this, evidence of practical instincts, which led him beyond the subtleties of a mere discussion of theories, and theories which might have left others despairing and despondent, stimulated Gokhale's efforts towards the achievement of the practical, even though his idealism had to be tempered with what were only hard unwelcome facts of an ugly situation.

But the achievement of Gokhale's which will lift him to the highest pinnacle of fame, was his failure (or what seemed like failure) in getting his Education Bill for free and compulsory instruction for the masses passed by the Imperial Council ! He no doubt failed in his objective, but by his heroic efforts towards stimulating public opinion and even educating the official mind out of indifference to the stupendous volume of India's illiteracy, and the moral

and material helplessness which it connotes, he has done more than perhaps, he himself had sufficiently thought. For to-day people have begun to realise that the *problem* is an urgent one, and needs diplomatic and even generous handling. To-day, if a similar bill were to be manœuvred through the Council, even nominated members would vote in its favour, and even the Moslem League would heartily endorse its soundness and desirability. It was no revelation of Gokhale's that after a century and a half of British rule, only ten per cent. of men and one per cent. of women had derived the benefits of rudimentary instruction.

But, even so, the focussing of public interest on this question, and on the recognition that no substantial political progress or even social advance is possible apart from the upliftment of the masses, has been encouraged as the necessary sequel to Gokhale's passion for this much needed reform.

The Government of India, we understand, viewed this modest measure with sympathy and even approval, if only because of the progressive views entertained by Sir Harcourt Butler, the Member for Education. But the Provincial Governments were not so advanced as to welcome this step big with meaning and promise for the future of India. Besides, there were even popular bodies that had not sufficiently intelligently grasped the import of this proposal. Still it has stung the Government into strenuous activity and it has discouraged lethargy and indifference, on the part of the people,

No less admirable was his able marshalling of

statistics and his moderate though exceedingly convincing presentation of fact and argument.

His command over the English language, his mastery of the methods of debate, his appreciation of friends, and fairness towards opponents, called forth the admiration and respect of all that had dealings with him.

Even such a past-master in literary style and adept at handling figures as Lord Curzon, declared in Council—not once or twice but repeatedly—that it was a rare honour “to cross swords with the Honourable Mr. Gokhale.” Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson, the late Finance Minister of the Government of India, used to compare him to Mr. Gladstone in point of his great ability in the accurate handling of data, and the right interpretation of statistics. When owing to his unavoidable absence from the Council chamber, occasioned by his nomination to a membership of the Royal Commission on the public services of India, his unique qualities of “Leader of His Majesty’s Opposition” were greatly missed, Sir Guy frankly confessed before the Members that the discussion of the Annual Budget without the presence of Mr. Gokhale was “like the study of Hamlet with Hamlet left out.”

No less conspicuous were Gokhale’s efforts while member of the Royal Islington Commission to press forward Indian claims, to plead for the removal of racial bars and colour bars and the fuller concession to them of positions of trust and responsibility; for the initiation of a generous policy which will recognise the primacy of the claims of Indians in their



own country ; for a fairer recognition of Indian talent and administrative capacity by giving to them higher appointments than the narrow-minded policy of the day had made possible. By skilful thrust-and-parry in cross-questioning ; by offering information where desirable ; by combating ingenious subterfuges and specious arguments offered by the Bureaucracy in India as a reason for shutting out Indians from the higher rungs of the official ladder, Mr. Gokhale did splendid service to the Indian cause. And though Mr. Bhupendra Nath Basu, the present Indian Member of the Council for India, has already characterised the final Report of the Commission as " a mere scrap of paper fit for the waste-basket," in the presence of Lord Chelmsford, it is also true that whatever embodied in the Commission's Report points to the dawning of an ampler day for the youth of India is mainly owing to Gokhale's able and expert advocacy of legitimate claims, in the teeth of the organised resistance opposed by the vested interests in India.

Gokhale was by no means an imperialist, but he was genuinely loyal to the Imperial economy, partly because of his conviction that a strong and stable government was essential to the Indian development ; partly because he thought of the British connection as, in the judgment of the more desirable element among the Empire-builders, consisting of a federation of races engaged in achieving common ends ; but mainly because of the feeling that as the British democracy takes an increasing interest in the affairs of the Dependency, it will be possible for Indians,

within the economy of the Empire, to rise to the full stature of their height. He was fully sensible of the humiliations to which a subject-race is submitted. And as a member of a race that shortly before the establishment of British ascendancy wielded the reins of Empire, he must certainly be looking forward to India's entering on her fuller inheritance, on an equality with the sister-nations of the Commonwealth.

In the meanwhile, he acquiesced in India's present anomalous predicament as a part of the discipline of growth, so that she may thus learn to set her house in order and acquire that spirit of unity, catholicity and co-operation, without which no nation can ever stand on her own feet.

But friendly and genial as Gokhale ever was, he could pour out vials of wrath on measures which he held to be inconsistent with liberty or justice. Only he would never let his speech degenerate into venomous diatribes or caustic personal attacks. He had the fully developed instincts of a perfect gentleman.

Gokhale was fond of manly out-door sports like cricket and football, though he never excelled in either, also of billiards and other indoor games, cards included. He was thorough in his work always, but he would let work accumulate for a season, and then when the humour for industrious application seized him, he would start to clear off whole piles of arrears, and would not rest till the task was quite accomplished.

His death on 20th February, 1915, removed a very striking personality and a restraining influence from

Indian politics. Shortly before his death, he very politely and with great dignity declined the offer of a K.C.S.I., communicated through Lord Crewe, then Secretary of State for India, as he sincerely felt that the acceptance of this great personal distinction might hamper his public activities.



## IX

### M. K. GANDHI

GANDHI comes of an influential family of noble lineage, and was born in Porbander, on the 2nd of October, 1869, where his father, Karam Chand, was Prime Minister to the Thakur Sahib of Rājkot. He was the youngest of three children in the Dewān Sahib's family. After matriculating from Ahmedabad, Mohan Dās, the subject of the present sketch, wanted to graduate from the Bhavnagar College, but a shrewd Brahmin friend, who was Gandhi's adviser, suggested that he should proceed to London and qualify for the Bar, if he meant to acquire influence and fame. Mohan Das' brother, with characteristic generosity, sold the greater part of his property to supply the younger brother with funds that would make the contemplated adventure possible. But his mother, who had heard of the numerous temptations to which youth may succumb in London, was greatly perturbed in her mind, and consented only when the young Mohan Dās took a solemn vow—a threefold vow of renunciation—that he would on principle abstain from meat, wine and women.

In spite of strong incitements to the contrary, Gandhi refused to touch meat even on social functions, though he took rather kindly to dancing and violin

playing, which he soon gave up as being a not quite congenial recreation. It must have been an amusing sight when Gandhi, dressed in coloured flannels, arrived at Hotel Victoria, one September morning, in 1888, and was puzzled to see so many Londoners' gaze fixed on his picturesque dress! He was convinced that some very rough weather was in store for him in London!

Throughout his stay in London he scorned delights and lived laborious days, and his joy knew no bounds when in 1891 he was called to the Bar as member of the Inner Temple, one of the most exclusive of the Inns of Court. He always lived frugally, seldom letting his weekly expense exceed £1, and carefully abstaining from every form of luxury.

He made numerous English friends in London. He was very fond of listening to Archdeacon Farrar's sermons, but Dr. Parker of the City Temple was his favourite preacher, of whom he never tired. A friend asked him to promise to read the Bible he presented to Gandhi, but by the time he finished Exodus, Gandhi gave it up in despair, as he did not understand a word of what he read.

Gandhi met with the first serious disappointment in his life, when on his return from London in 1891, he learnt that his mother was dead. It was a cruel, stunning shock which his friends and relatives tried to withhold from Gandhi, concealing the news from him. Gandhi was duly received back into the family after submitting to the purificatory rites, secretly performed by the priests, even though the members of his community were at first so indignant over

his contemplated visit to England that they entirely washed their hands of him. He wanted to settle down to legal practice in Kathiawar, when a famous Indian firm engaged his services, to defend an important law-suit to be launched in South Africa.

His experiences with the people in South Africa were very unpleasant and embittering, and greatly disillusioned him. For the first time, he felt that, as an Asiatic, he was looked down upon as member of a race that had no political standing. He was often offered insult while travelling, his furniture being pitched out after him. Ridicule and insult would be poured on him because of the dark pigmentation of his skin. Later, when he applied to be enrolled as Advocate of the Supreme Court, the Law Society of South Africa resisted the application on the ground that coloured barristers could not be given that status. But wiser counsels prevailed with the Supreme Court authorities, and the barrister of Inner Temple, London, was actually enrolled as Advocate.

After having met with a most cordial reception in London, these tragic and humiliating incidents sent cold shivers through his blood. But his courtesy and humility never forsook him, and he would often disarm opposition by the force of his genial and affable disposition.

When Gandhi first visited South Africa, he found that the Indian labourers and others had no sense of dignity, were perfectly contented with their lot, and did not even resent the shameful treatment accorded to them. It was mainly through Gandhi's efforts that the proposed disfranchisement of Indians



failed to receive the Royal assent. But he did not propose to stay on in South Africa and wanted to return as soon as possible to India.

When the Indians in South Africa requested him, with one voice, to assume their leadership, he yielded to their entreaties, deciding to earn his livelihood by the practice of law.

Gandhi has evidently inherited the spirit of passive resistance from his father, who ever stubbornly refused to obey unreasonable orders. Once he fell out with the British Political Agent in Kathiawar for having passed some strictures on the Thakur Sahib. The Resident soon found out that tying Karam Chand to a tree would produce no apology from him. He had once his house bombarded by the State troops, because of his refractory behaviour towards the Raja, who wanted Karam Chand to carry out some instructions contrary to the latter's judgment.

Gandhi approves of passive resistance as being superior in quality to resistance with physical force, and as connoting a higher stage of development. But the success of the movement depends, according to him, on the reasonableness of the cause for whose vindication it is organised, and the reality of the grievances whose redress it seeks.

It is sometimes pointed out that political movements in India have, as their objective, the amelioration of the status of educated Indians and men of the upper classes, and are positively indifferent to the interests of the proletariat. The very mention of Mr. Gandhi's name is enough to dispel the erroneous impression. Gandhi may quite properly be called

the greatest Labour Leader of India, even though the sphere of his activities has been South Africa, for the most part, and he has not yet organised a Labour movement, constructive in its aims and aggressive in its demands—of the type that obtains in Western countries. In fact, Gandhi would be the last person to inspire the same ideals into an Indian organisation as are operative in Western labour movements in their persistent struggles with powerful capitalistic interests. Being an uncompromising Tolstoyan, and completely other-worldly in all affairs, he would abstain, on principle and in virtue of his passivist and quiescent temperament, from driving the demands of labour to their logical conclusion. Besides, the masses of Indian labourers being illiterate, it would be difficult, under existing circumstances, even to expound to them the first principles involved in the fiercer struggles, in more progressive countries for the capture of power and political control, for the abolition of capitalism itself, for the conscription of wealth or for the nationalisation and state-control of industries.

The problems that Gandhi has had actually to face have been of a different nature, quite remote from the region of Socialism or even that of an industrial revolution. In passing judgments on Gandhi's work, therefore, we must appreciate the nature of the problems that he has had to face and also the solutions towards which he has helped. And we must, likewise, bear in mind that the utility of Gandhi's services, apart from their intrinsic worth, consists in his complete identification as an intellectual

and as a member of the upper middle class, with the struggles, risks and hardships of skilled and unskilled labour. He has been *for* the proletariat, though not *of* them. Nor has his work consisted of mere platform oratory. He has had to suffer with the poor and the oppressed. On more than one occasion he has had to face the ugly passions of excitable and hostile crowds in South Africa. Once the timely intervention of an English lady saved him from being kicked to death by some hooligans in a mob. On numerous occasions has he been sent to prison, where he had to submit to the indignities and roughness of Kafir warders, who would offer him food that was most repugnant to him.

When we remember that Gandhi is physically very delicate, though capable of great powers of endurance, we get some notion of how his severe handling by the authorities in South Africa must have affected him. Often he would politely decline preferential treatment by the South African courts, and being tried as an ordinary indentured labourer would accept the hard lot that was bound up with his ill-starred position. Once, on his return from India, the passengers of his ship were not allowed to land, the populace issuing the threat that should they disembark, they would certainly be put to death. But Gandhi was not to be bluffed. He insisted on his rights, and on those of his fellow-passengers, and made the authorities yield to his pressure, and on landing was given the protection of law, which however did not keep him immune from the fierce onslaughts of the populace.



But the tragi-comic nature of the whole struggle carried on for over a quarter of a century is obvious from the fact that the Indian labourers were denied the ordinary rights of British citizens, were treated as little better than helots ; often subjected to the lash, and the sjambok for the paltriest of offences, sent to prison for real or alleged slackness in work, and their economic status was such as would provoke only farcical smiles in civilised countries as well as indignation.

The seriousness of their predicament was enhanced by their being sent to South Africa, under the assurances from the Home and Indian Governments that in point of treatment they will not be considered " One whit inferior to European settlers " and their rights will be zealously safeguarded. But the flamboyant promises of Lord Rosebery and Lord Curzon were one thing, and the complete disillusionment of the immigrants, quite another. It was their virtues of thrift, industry and prudence that aroused the bitter antipathy of the labourers and retail shopkeepers in South Africa—and not their vices. They saw in these honest, frugal and hard-working Indian labourers their potential rivals.

But the grievous anomalies with which the Indian labourers have been visited in South Africa spring out of the evil system whose hidden menace was either not anticipated by the Government or else quietly ignored under the pressure of powerful interests. That evil system was one of indentured labour. Under this system contracts ratified between employer and employee could not be revoked

for seven or ten years, however unsatisfactory the working of the contract might be to the parties involved. It left no scope for revision, amendment or termination. Whatever the difficulties issuing from the agreement, its revocation was not possible, and, further, its avoidance could be penalised as a criminal offence.

But a still more hideous feature of these business transactions—if such they might be called—was that on the termination of the “indenture” the employers would neither undertake to repatriate the labourer, nor yet allow him to settle down to some business of his own, but would only bully him into indenture again, so that he might again be compelled to work on nominal wages—two or three shillings a week—for an indefinite period, the issue of shop-licences being denied him. So the labourers soon discovered that they had not landed on a soil that was flowing with milk and honey, as the Employment Agents canvassing for recruits and unofficially co-operating with the Government had told them before leaving India. The most inhuman feature of this brutal system was the arrangement by which “fags” were added on, on the ground of bad work done. A “slacker” would be told that to compensate for slowness or slovenliness in to-day’s work, he must put in an extra seven days!!! Thus a labourer would find that slackness in five days’ work meant an extra fifty or even five hundred days, while the original contract stood as valid as ever! No wonder, then, that these “slaves” were put in allotments, refused entrance in public

trams and carriages or admission into public parks.

But incredible as all these modes of ill-treatment seem to be, there was apparently no limit to the savageries that might, with impunity, be heaped on the heads of these British subjects of the Empire. It is to be presumed that our Cabinet ministers knew of these unsavoury facts, but either felt their incompetence to interfere with the affairs of the self-governing colony or perhaps realised that the sense of solidarity was not sufficiently awakened in Indians to lead them to express resentment at these indignities. In all probability it was the former idea that was obsessing their minds. But when to add to the above atrocities, certain courts of competent jurisdiction in Durban and elsewhere, found that even properly solemnised and legal marriages contracted by Hindus and Muhammadans could not be recognised as valid in South Africa because polygamous unions were, at times, resorted to by them, and when on the ground of this plea even monogamous unions were declared to be illicit, for purposes of admission to the colony, the Indian colony of labourers was provoked beyond the utmost limits of endurance.

It was during all these crises that Gandhi preserved his equanimity of mind, took his stand on the citizenship of the Empire, memorialised the authorities for the redress of their grievances, and when all his resources failed him, organised the passive resistance movement.

He remained leader of the Indians from year the 1893 to 1914, when on the outbreak of war he



organised an ambulance corps recruited by Indians resident in London, most of them being students.

It is a welcome sign of the times that owing to Lord Hardinge's bold intervention on behalf of Indians in South Africa, some legislation has been introduced which has swept away the worst forms of the evil. Lord Chelmsford has since announced that indentured labour has already been abolished in the colonies of the Empire, though we do not, at the time of writing, know definitely, whether in actual practice or as a contemplated step, to take effect gradually.

It is also to be hoped that the spirit of *camaraderie* which the common defence of Empire has fostered among the colonials will make the prevalence of cordial and harmonious relations a normal feature of the meeting of the races within the Empire.

## X

### KALI CHARAN BANURJI

It is sometimes suggested, with a poignant sense of disappointment, that Indian Christians as a body have not brought themselves into full accord with national aspirations and ideals. But if we analyse this statement we shall discover how superficial it is. In the first place, no Indian community *as such* has, in its entirety, subscribed to the political ideals that are being formulated and asserted in the India of to-day with an increasing degree of dignity and self-consciousness. In fact, political thinkers and leaders have found it an uphill task, even among Hindus and Moslems, the two dominant sister communities, to swell the number of those that have broken away from petty, parochial, communal ideas and from the pursuit of self-interest. The conversion of the All-India Moslem League to the ideals of the Congress party, in itself the happiest augury of the times, is only a matter of recent growth. Even among the Hindus, who have contributed the ablest and most outstanding leaders to the national cause, it would be inaccurate to say that every educated member is in full agreement with the ideal of Home Rule, for instance.

All that might be legitimately pointed out is that

Indian Christians have not given to the national cause the number of thinkers and leaders, as might have been expected from a community that has publicly repudiated the evils that hamper national unification and which, therefore, ought, in consistency, to be politically progressive. But when we remember that an overwhelmingly large percentage of the converts consists of men and women that have been kept under, through the centuries, denied opportunities for education and culture and are to-day in *economic dependence* on foreign missionary enterprise, we shall have formed some idea of the difficulties that beset their path. Besides, even in the most progressive countries in the West, the politicians have, in the past, almost invariably sprung from the leisured classes, or the go-ahead middle class. So that it is hardly reasonable to point the finger of scorn at the converted pariahs in India, that they do not keep abreast of the most progressive movements, just as it would scarcely be reasonable to pour ridicule on honest, hard-working chimney-sweepers or green-grocers that they do not take sufficiently intelligent interest in Mr. Fisher's Education Bill. How can they with their hands full of the immediate needs of the hour and the grim struggles for mere existence ?

As Mr. Justice Abdur Rahim rightly points out in his Minority Report—appended to the Report of the Royal Islington Commission—that as many of the Indian Christian community as are politically articulate are in the fullest sympathy with the ideals of their fellow-countrymen, it is obvious that among



them there is no paucity of men with vision and ideals: only such men are mainly recruited from the better classes, conventionally so-called; men, moreover, with education and capacity for thinking and with their status in life secure and guaranteed against financial dependence on people that may be critical of Indian views. It has been the writer's privilege to see on the Congress platform, from year to year, a large number of lawyers, doctors, professors, and men belonging to other walks of life, and to the Christian Community, sent as delegates by their Hindu and Muhammadan brethren, especially from Madras and Bengal.

Among the politicals that the Christian community has produced, Kali Charan is the most prominent, not only because of his complete identification with and life-long loyalty to the Indian cause, but also by reason of his persistent refusal to allow Westernisation in manners to stand in the way of unhindered social intercourse with his friends. An Indian to the backbone, Kali Charan always strove to raise the general tone of public life in Calcutta, and his intense spiritual earnestness, combined with suave manners and an unimpeachable character, lent especial weight to his advocacy of Indian demands. He even strove to the best of his ability to nationalise the Indian Church and rid it of financial and intellectual dependence on the West, and his short-lived Christo-Samaj (Church of Christ) was a brilliant experiment along placing corporate religious life on Indian foundations. From its very inception Kali Charan was the chief guiding spirit of the National Missionary

Society, which sprang up under the impetus of the Nationalist spirit, as the community was overborne with the conviction that spiritual autonomy and control of religious organisations under Indian auspices was just as important as asserting rightful political claims.

Kali Charan Banurji was born on 9th February, 1847, of Kulin Brahmin parentage, and invested with the sacred thread when he was only eight years old. When only twelve, he was prepared for the entrance examination, but was not allowed to sit for it till the next year, when he passed with distinction and was awarded a scholarship and a silver medal. In 1862, he sat for the First Arts, and won a scholarship again. He was thus enabled not only to prosecute his studies but also to support his people, who were very poor. His father, Harra Chandra Banurji, was very affectionate towards him and anxious to make any sacrifice for the sake of the promising son. When only an undergraduate he was appointed tutor to the son-in-law and grandson of Prosanna Coomar Tagore, in preference to many brilliant graduates, by reason of his ability, honesty and outstanding integrity of character. In 1868 he was successful in the B.A. degree examination, and stood fourth in order of merit, in the company of such eminent men as Sir Guru Dass Banurji, Sir Rash Behari Ghose and others.

He won a gold medal, and was appointed by Dr. Duff as professor in the Free Church institution and the next year he took his M.A. degree in mental and moral philosophy, when he was promoted to a senior professorship.

His public activities were varied and unceasing. He undoubtedly did the same service towards cleansing public life of baser motives and inspiring high ideals of civic responsibility, in Calcutta, as Sir Narayan Chandavarkar and the late Mr. Justice Ranade have done for Bombay. Throughout his life he never surrendered his political convictions, but he strongly felt that purity in personal and national life was essential to efficiency in political propaganda.

He would frequently lecture on religious subjects in Calcutta and Bombay, and once even went to America to represent what was best in Indian religions and to interpret the East to the West. He would let his ambitions of success in legal practice be subordinated to the passion for presenting the highest elements of the Christian religion to his Hindu and Muhammadan compatriots.

He exercised a tremendous influence over the students, and to come into his presence was to be lifted into a lofty plane of spirituality and to acquire a new consciousness of national dignity. His political and religious presentations were alike free from racial bias or acrimony and exhibited, at their best, his catholicity of temper and unflinching loyalty to definite convictions. A short time before his death he was selected as delegate to the convention of the World's Student Christian Federation in 1906 but his failing health prevented him from attending.

On his death on February 6th, 1907, the whole of Calcutta was plunged in grief. All communities united to honour his memory as that of a devoted



public servant and saint. The whole of political India went into mourning over the tragic event.

“ I learned to love him;” writes Sir Andrew Fraser, “ for his deep spirituality, his personal loyalty to God . . . and his unselfish interest in all good work. It was specially delightful to see how thoroughly he remained identified in interest with his fellow-countrymen, for whom, despite the persecution which followed his conversion, he ever retained undiminished, passionate love.”

The *Amrita Bazaar Patrika* paid the following compliment: “ A profound scholar, a fervent patriot, a born orator, a man of stainless character, deep purity and sweet manners.”

Mr. Surendra Nath Bannerjea, the eminent politician, addressing a crowded meeting said: “ I have never come across in the whole of my life a greater, higher or a nobler soul than the soul of the late Kali Charan Banurji. He was the very personification of gentleness. He had no self-assertion, no desire to obtrude himself into places where he was not wanted. Humility—a Christian, child-like humility was incarnated in that guiltless personality.”

Sir Rash Behari Ghose, in the course of his presidential address before the twenty-third session of the Indian National Congress, paid the touching tribute:

“ When we think of the lonely Scotch cemetery in Koraya where the remains were laid, we cannot help feeling, how much learning, how much modest and unassuming simplicity, how much piety, how much unassuming tenderness, and how much patriotism lie buried in the grave of Kali Charan Banurji. True,

he no longer lives in his own person, but he lives in us and will live in those who succeed us, enjoying an immortality that is not given to many sons of men."

When at a full meeting in Overtown Hall, in Calcutta, Dr. Kenneth S. MacDonald said that Mr. Banurji represented the Christian community, Sir Guru Das Banurji at once rose to his feet, and amidst deafening cheers said that he represented all communities.

Kali Charan Banurji, in his capacity as member of the Bengal Legislative Council, as vice-chairman of the Calcutta Corporation, and as one of the presidents of the National Missionary Society, rendered eminent services in the most unassuming of ways and has exerted an influence on public life, far beyond the confines of Bengal, which lives even to-day as a potent moulding factor of national importance.

## XI

### BĀL GANGADHAR TILAK

“ In spite of the verdict of the jury, I maintain that I am innocent. There are higher powers that rule the destiny of things, and it may be the will of providence that the cause which I represent may prosper more by my suffering than by my remaining free.”—(22nd July, 1908).

“ Mr. Tilak is fully cognisant of the benefits that have accrued from the British connection and acknowledges them frankly. But he demands the transference of the political power from the bureaucracy to the people.”—Summary of the High Court finding, when the bonds which Tilak had to execute for being of good behaviour, were cancelled in 1917.

It is to Gokhale's credit that he successfully applied western methods of study and discussion while facing *particular* difficulties and suggested a solution of *individual* problems. It is also to be admitted that he performed skilful and brilliant debating manœuvres when threshing out Indian questions in the Council Chamber or on the public platform, as emergency arose. It is just as really to Tilak's credit that he has created, through his untold sufferings and remarkable powers of organisation, a new environment of self-reliance, wherein free and frank discussion is possible, be the problems what they may, and has infused into all political discussion that spirit of virility and robust self-respect without which mere academic discussions degenerate into an invertebrate verbosity. Gokhale has, owing mainly to his spirit of sensible compromise, hammered



out Indian issues and given them a visible tangible expression. Tilak has called into being the attitude of audacity and adventure, without which the facing of live political issues becomes a hollow mockery. Gokhale may aptly be characterised as the chief guiding spirit of political movements in India, whereas Tilak has fully vindicated his claim to be the soul of Indian politics, in Western India, at the very least. Tilak's fame and influence have travelled far, far beyond his domiciliary limits, and dominate the minds of the rising generation of educated Indians as well as those of the illiterate and inarticulate masses. His adherents are not, by any means, confined to Western India or the Hindu masses. Without Gokhale, who was not a popular hero, political forces could not be wisely controlled ; but without Tilak these will not be generated at all. Gokhale had the dignity and the aloofness of a Cabinet Minister, Tilak has the geniality, the easy accessibility, if also the imperious disposition of the leader of popular movements. Gokhale would exert diplomatic pressure for being given a few concessions if these were obtainable, regarding these temporary expedients as the roadway leading to self-government. Tilak boldly proclaimed that freedom is the coping-stone of nationality and that a people " knuckling under " to a repressive bureaucracy has its spiritual unity mutilated and its growth stunted. But to the best of the writer's knowledge Tilak believes in the Imperial economy, and only demands that India should, in the near future, be given autonomy like the sister-nations of the British Commonwealth

Thus Tilak begins where Gokhale would end ; he thus asks to-day, as India's inherent birthright, what Gokhale believed to be possible after a series of concessions or favours, say twenty-five to fifty years hence, if not longer. It falls beyond the scope of this book to discuss the relative merits of these two different attitudes, reflecting a somewhat different mentality. Suffice it to say that during the present war, the national idea is being thrust into the foreground of international recognition, and people are realising that Imperialism is an unpardonable sin, since it involves the submergence, if not the entire suppression of distinct nationalities, to which civilisation and freedom must concede the right to work out their own destinies unfettered by the vested interests of foreign bureaucracies and reactionary military cliques. That being so, we find it rather difficult to see the consistency or even the intelligence of those who would fain accuse Bal Gangadhar Tilak of political anarchism. Granted, that the Indian bureaucracy find in him a most inconvenient customer, with a large and growing following, gifted with an unflagging zeal for service, dowered with an amazing capacity for suffering, and yet anxious to pursue his intellectual pursuits in his leisure. But vague accusations and sweeping generalisations are no proof. Every one, will, of course, admit that the manner in which he used to express his views, has not always been discreet or conciliatory ; but this is due not to his anarchist tendencies, but to the strength of his convictions and the corresponding incapacity for tempering the

severity of his expressions. Compared to the moderate views of Mr. Gokhale—which, by the way, were just as inconvenient to officialism in India—he may rightly be called an extremist, but since he is not out to subvert British authority in India, the writer quite fails to appreciate the fairness or honesty of those who brand him as an anarchist. If his approval of the boycott resolution and of those passed in favour of National education and Swarāj or Home Rule for India at the Surat Congress of 1907, were interpreted as “seditious,” then even Mr. Gokhale would fall under the category of seditionists, since he wholeheartedly supported the resolution on boycott of Lancashire goods. The truth of the matter, however, is that the years 1904 to 1912 marked an era of political unsettlement, when India was passing through an acute crisis. Unfortunately, certain things were done, probably in good faith, but in a provocative and irresponsible manner, for example the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon, which added fuel to the fire of overwrought passions. But when the visit of the king and the announcement of reforms in 1912, provided a safety-valve for the pent-up feelings and the torturing suspense of the people, the excitement slowly subsided, and to-day we find that the keen enthusiasm for independence that arose with the growing sense of confidence is slowly seeking out channels of expression through co-operation with the government, and in working out a scheme of reforms that will lay the foundations of self-government within the Empire.



Tilak was born on the 8th of January, 1856, in the Ratnagiri District, of a family of Chitpavan Brahmins that led the Marathas against Moghul invaders, and which provided the Peshwas or prime ministers to Maratha rulers. His father, who was Assistant Deputy Educational Inspector for the districts of Poona and Thana, in the Bombay presidency, died when Bāl Gangadhar was only sixteen, and was about to matriculate from school. This tragic event, instead of depressing the spirits of the little boy, spurred him on to complete his education. He was fortunate in winning scholarships, without which the slender means of the family would be hardly enough to bear his maintenance. In 1876, at the early age of twenty, we find him take first-class honours in the B.A. degree examination, which he passed as a student of the Deccan College. Three years later, he took the LL.B. degree with distinction.

From the first, Tilak had a natural aversion to being in the trammels of Government service. He loved the freedom which would provide wider opportunities for serving his country. Having a fertile imagination and great capacity for work, he soon discovered that the most effective way of helping his country on to a higher stage of evolution would be through the establishment of English primary and secondary schools that might serve as feeders for English Colleges, manned and financed by Indians.

In all his plans and resolutions he had an able and distinguished sympathiser and supporter in Agarkar, who later became principal of the Fergusson

College, Poona. It might be mentioned here, in passing, that it was Messrs. Tilak, Chiplunker, Agarkar and perhaps V. S. Apte (who joined Tilak a little later than the others) that founded the Deccan Education Society in 1880, in furtherance of whose policy the Fergusson College at Poona came into being. These were all highly-educated men, with keen social enthusiasm and fired with a zeal for service, Tilak being the chief personality in all their deliberations. Mr. V. S. Apte, M.A., was a brilliant Sanskrit scholar—his book on Sanskrit composition being still considered a useful book—and a distinguished graduate in arts and law besides. The Sarvajānik Sabha was founded in 1888, mainly through Tilak's efforts, the object being to promote social reform and to keep the Government informed in regard to the requirements of the people.

Unfortunately, some minor differences in regard to the general policy to be pursued in College work, became sharp and acute, and led to Agarkar's desertion of his colleague, for whom he had unbounded respect. Differences affecting details of social reform came, likewise, to a head, and created further divisions in the friendly camp, resulting in the withdrawal of Messrs. Chiplunkar and V. S. Apte from co-operation with Tilak. Chiplunkar was a most valuable helper in Tilak's journalistic propaganda, in the interests of which he had established the *Maratha* and the *Kesari*. It is said that Tilak's attitude towards social reform in general led to this wholesale alienation of valuable lieutenants and colleagues. Tilak's friends tell us that he is not, by

any means, a reactionary in social matters, that he never gave his daughters in marriage till they had exceeded the limits prescribed by the Hindu Shastras, and that he is a radical thinker all round. His antagonism to social legislation to be initiated by Government, however, arises owing to his conviction that *coercion* in social matters is as demoralising as repression in the political sphere, and that, while approving of the main principle of reform, he would rely, almost exclusively, on prevailing common-sense and on the building up of public opinion. His critics, however, tell us that he is fond of tub-thumping and producing a sensational, theatrical effect on the populace, by bandying popular catchwords.

In case of a less powerful personality, this wholesale estrangement from fellow-workers, with whom Tilak had discussed the dreams of his life, and with whose assistance he had materialised his plans, would have meant the complete shattering of his life-work. Not so with Tilak. His courage rose with danger. And right till the end, he stuck to his guns. He soon found himself in charge of both the papers, *Kesari* and the *Maratha*. It was for him to dictate their policy and conduct their management. We are not, by any means, blind followers of Tilak, nor have we the slightest desire to extenuate his occasional lack of discretion or to hold him up as an ideal of political sagacity. We certainly view with astonishment his attitude towards social reform, especially as we realise that he always has been an advanced thinker, not only politically, but also in the domain of religion and social development. But no one, unless party



bias, has completely wrecked his judgment, can help admiring his courage. And the spirit of courage is his bequest to political life in India. There are abler politicians in India, as also men gifted with better constructive statesmanship, but no politician or publicist comes up to him in point of tenacity of purpose and a "bull-dog" determination. And none will more loyally stand by his colleagues in the hour of danger or contumely or persecution.

Nor can we consistently hold Tilak up to a charge of apostasy in matters of social reform, when we remember that he considered the infusing of a manly spirit in the people as the culture-ground of all social progress, and he viewed with alarm the swamping of political enthusiasm by a mere agitation for artificially stimulated reform. He has, rightly or wrongly, been always opposed to playing into the hands of officialdom, and he therefore strongly felt—and we presume still feels—that all healthy and vigorous reform must be spontaneous, and be the direct expression of political emancipation. Some of his best friends call him narrow, orthodox, and we are by no means convinced of his progressive tendencies in the past, in religious and social matters. But what we have said above, will very probably be the substance of Tilak's reply to those who enter a caveat against him on the above grounds. Besides his shrewd instincts must have prompted him to take the largest possible audiences with him in political matters, and it is the merest commonplace to remind our readers that popular—and shall we

say?—ambitious leaders must understand the psychology of their adherents and exploit flamboyant catchwords that would ensure success and swell the numbers of followers. For is it not true that highly cultivated, heterodox leaders, controlled in their expression and sober in their judgments, have at best a limited scope in any country, leave alone highly conservative countries where politicians have an uphill task, because of the comparative absence, among the masses, of those political conceptions and ambitions of which leaders may make much patriotic capital? Are leaders to suspend political action till the masses have been educated and politically trained? But that consummation may only be hastened by strenuous political demands. And those demands will only prevail, when the authorities feel that the masses do, in some measure, back them up. Those who are prone to condemn Tilak because of his organising celebrations of Sivaji's birthday, may well bear in mind, that in countries where political training of the people is almost neglected, some such expedient may be necessary to arouse the illiterate masses to vigorous political action. Besides, an endeavour to keep the memories of a historic past green, is only natural. And we admire patriotism and national fervour in other countries. We naturally do not take much account of those countries where people despise their national heritage. We call them decadent, unprogressive and traitrous. Why should we, then, condemn the spirit of national self-consciousness in India, if its inevitable con-

comitants are a revival of pride in the past which can serve as a guide in future activities, simply because of her political antecedents?

We quite appreciate that the Government must also feel, in these matters, a serious sense of responsibility. And it is for them to direct this national enthusiasm, by providing legitimate outlets for it, instead of striving to suppress it.

But to continue. The appointment in 1890, of Mr. G. K. Gokhale as Secretary of the Sarvajanik Society severed Tilak's last link with old friends. The organisation was later recaptured by Tilak, but the Government considered his views as rather intemperate and inconvenient. And the result was that short and curt replies were sent by Government departments, and on Tilak's continuance of his bold, if sometimes irresponsible criticisms, the organisation was suppressed altogether. The only silver-lining to these sombre clouds, was K. C. Kelkar's unflinching loyalty to Tilak in all his journalistic enterprises.

During the famine of 1896, he rendered yeoman's service to the country, opening cheap grain shops for the famine-stricken. His papers demanded that the provisions of the Famine Code be generously applied, and offered suggestions to the Government which if accepted, would certainly have diminished the volume of distress. When a virulent epidemic of plague broke out in the Bombay presidency, he offered to visit the homes of the people as a volunteer in the company of Government Inspectors and risked



his life, more than once by offering to stay with the plague-stricken, and during times when his "Social reform" opponents fled away in sheer panic, Tilak offered his services unreservedly to the government and the people.

On the 22nd June, 1897, Mr. Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst were murdered by some unknown assassin in Poona. On the 26th July, the Government gave sanction to prosecute Mr. Tilak, as if his propaganda were indirectly responsible for this outburst of fanaticism. Tilak was sentenced to eighteen months' rigorous imprisonment, and denied even the right of appeal, by Mr. Justice Strachey. But some time later, Mr. H. H. Asquith—now the Right Honourable Mr. Asquith, late Premier of Great Britain—pleaded misdirection of the Jury, while defending Tilak before the Lord Chancellor, in London. Nothing came of the appeal. Soon after, Professor Max Müller and others presented a powerful petition to Queen Victoria, imploring her to grant reprieve to the distinguished scholar. Tilak was, accordingly, released on the 6th of September, 1898.

In 1908, we again find him awaiting his trial before Mr. Justice Davar, his advocate in the previous case. He was charged with "sedition," the implications of that rather comprehensive word not being made clear, and the various charges being as vague as vague could be. Certainly, no disturbances had taken place in Poona, as the sequel to his articles or speeches, nor were the passages specified to which exception was taken.

After a long trial, throughout which Mr. Tilak conducted his own case with ability and with a remarkable legal acumen, the sentence of six years' imprisonment with *hard labour* was delivered by Mr. Justice Davar, the Parsee gentleman who, during his previous trial, was Tilak's advocate. But wiser counsels prevailed with the Government, who recognised the ultra-severity of hard labour in a political offence, and commuted it to six years' simple imprisonment. Tilak's final statement to the jury after they pronounced their verdict of " guilty " has already become part of Indian history.

Seven days' riots took place after the imprisonment of Tilak, and Lord Sydenham realised for the first time the amount of Tilak's influence in the presidency, after resort to severe measures adopted to suppress the riots.

When, however, on the expiry of this long term of imprisonment Tilak came out, there was great rejoicing throughout India. Instead of this crushing sentence—during whose currency he lost his affectionate and devoted wife—bringing about the " downfall of Tilak "—as Chirol inaptly puts it—it actually helped his uprise in Indian esteem ; and to-day Tilak is, beyond doubt, the " uncrowned king " of political India. He is the stormy petrel of the Indian revolutionary spirit ; not the spirit of rebellion that is based on hatred of the British connection, but the wholesome spirit of revolt against the strait-jacket of bureaucracy, the spirit which demands neither more nor less than a really autonomous India within the Empire. And even

those of us that deeply regret his occasional outbursts of injudicious utterance, find that in him India has a pillar of strength that can stand four-square to the winds of controversy and persecution.

But Tilak is no mere politician. He is a profound Sanskrit scholar besides. His "Artic home of the Vedas," and "Orion or researches into the antiquity of the Vedas," have commanded the respect and attention of such well-known orientalist as Professor Max Müller and Professor Warren, President of Boston University. Indeed, his friendship with Professor Max Müller was based on the latter's appreciation of his marvellous scholarship. Dr. Bloomfield, of the Johns Hopkins University, refering to Tilak's Vedic researches, said in the course of an anniversary address :

" But a literary event of even greater importance has happened within the last two or three months—an event which is certain to stir the world of science far more than the beatific reminiscences. Some ten weeks ago, I received from India a small duodecimo volume in the clumsy get-up and faulty typography of the Native Anglo-Indian press . . . nor was the preface at all encouraging. . . . But soon the amused smile gave way. . . . I was first impressed with something leonine in the way in which the author controlled the Vedic literature and the occidental works on the same. . . . I confess that the author had convinced me on all the essential points. The book is unquestionably the literary sensation of the year just before us ; history the chronic readjuster, shall have her hands



uncommonly full to assimilate the results of Tilak's discovery, and arrange her paraphernalia in the new perspective."

While professor at Fergusson College, Poona, Tilak was well-known for thoroughness. He is a brilliant mathematician, but he used to teach science and Sanskrit too.

During the war, Tilak gave loyal assistance to the Indian authorities in the matter of recruiting. He eloquently said that at this supreme crisis, all differences must be forgotten, that even in their own interests Indians should rally round the British flag. But, as ill-luck would have it, the Indian Headquarters Staff wanted only mercenary sepoys ; they were not then willing to accept the loyal offers of service from those who expected to be treated as the equals of their British comrades. The military authorities in India did not desire to mobilise the youth and generosity of India for the defence of the Empire ; they wanted so much old-fashioned fighting material that could be more conveniently handled. But so far as in him lay, Tilak co-operated with the authorities, and asked for recruitment to the Defence of India Force. We have not had access to Tilak's articles, written during the war, but from reliable sources we learn that the general purport of his appeals has been

1. That in spite of serious differences of a domestic nature still awaiting solution, there has been sufficient good understanding created between the British and Indians that could serve as vantage-ground for future progress.

2. That Indians must learn how to defend India, for a time may come when they must defend their hearths and homes against a powerful and highly organised Eastern or Western foe.

But in spite of his assurances and help, the Indian bureaucracy, quite heedless that the old man had just emerged from a six-year's imprisonment again restricted his movements and, later, asked him to execute bonds for being of good behaviour. This meant among other things that he could not come over to England to fight his case against Sir Valentine Chirol, passports for England being refused to Tilak. On appeal, however, the Judge of the Bombay High Court cancelled the bonds.

It is remarkable that the person who enjoys such questionable reputation at the hands of the bureaucracy as "sedition-monger" and the like, should be a distinguished member of the deputation that waited on the Right Honourable Mr. E. S. Montagu, some weeks ago in India.

Mrs. Annie Besant could have no better colleague in the working out of her Home Rule propaganda in Bombay, than Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The authorities knew this, and hence Sir Benjamin Robertson's Order in Council that was promulgated some time ago, prohibiting Mrs. Besant's entry into Bombay, or Poona. In spite of previous differences with Mrs. Besant, Tilak recognises that the launching of the Home Rule Movement augurs well for India, and so in a generous spirit the old Maratha warrior-politician is quite willing, we understand, to help

forward, so far as possible, Mrs. Besant's praiseworthy activities.

Tilak has had throughout his stormy career, intense sympathy with the poor ryots of India, and has ever shown himself a zealous advocate of India's voiceless millions. If others have served India through their success, Tilak has indisputably helped India through his failures and sufferings.



## XII

### BEPIN CHANDRA PĀL

We take the liberty to expound Bepin Chandra Pāl's views and state his contribution to the national movement, first because of our conviction that Bepin Chandra Pāl is *not* a revolutionary extremist according to any intelligible interpretation of that word ; and secondly, because of Pāl's open declaration before his last departure from England in 1912, that " should providence offer him the choice of absolute independence for India with one hand, and the alternative of self-government within the Empire with the other, I would unhesitatingly accept the latter." The very fact that even during the operation of the Defence of India Act, he enjoys his freedom in India, though some time ago we learnt that his movements were somewhat restricted, would give the direct lie to the suggestion that Bepin Chandra Pāl is an anarchist. And of all places, India would be the last to give asylum to men of pronounced revolutionary tendencies, especially to those who occupy a prominent place in public life and have some measure of influence over both intellectuals and the masses.

Sir Valentine Chirol gives the following characterisation of Pāl, in his book " The Indian Unrest " :

“ Now if Swarāj, or colonial self-government, represents the *minimum* that will satisfy Indian nationalists, it is important to know exactly what in their view it really means. . . . Some data of indisputable authority . . . are furnished in the speeches of an ‘advanced’ leader who *does not rank among the revolutionary extremists* (the italics are ours), though his refusal to give evidence in the trial of a seditious newspaper brought him in 1907 within the scope of the Indian Criminal Code. Mr. Bepin Chandra Pāl, a high-caste Hindu and a man of great intellectual force and high character, has not only received a Western education, but has travelled a great deal in Europe and in America,” (page 9).

In our opinion, it would be much nearer the truth to call him an Indian nationalist whose political idealism leads him to accept no compromise with the pressing emergencies of the Indian transition. But it is to his credit that he has made possible the first beginnings of an Indian Theory of the State. He is one of the *foremost thinkers*—political thinkers—in India.

It is as a *thinker* that Pāl has made a profound impression on the rising generation of Indians. Agreement with his conclusions is no component of admiration for his thinking. He has made young India think furiously on nationality, self-determination and self-help. Not that he has organised a movement through which his ideas may materialise in action. Nor are the ideals that he upholds realisable except through some sweeping and dramatic changes

in social conditions and political organisation among the people. Let us quote one significant utterance of his :

“ There is a creed in India to-day which calls itself Nationalism. It is not a mere political programme, but a religion, it is a creed in which all who follow it will have to live and suffer. Let no man call himself a nationalist to-day with a sort of intellectual conceit. To be a nationalist in India means to be an instrument of God, and to live in the Spirit. For the force that is awakening the nation is not of man, it is divine. We need not be a people who are politically strong ; we need not be a people sound in physique ; we need not be a people of the highest intellectual standing, but we must be a people who believe. . . . Nationalism is a divinely appointed power of the eternal, and must do its God-given work before it returns to the universal energy from whence it came.”

Pāl would not organise a rebellion against the existing system of control, but he would *mentally* revolt against its alien origin, as it does not leave sufficient scope for the initiative and energies of the people. To him self-government is not something that can be conferred on India *ab extra*, it is something that must be the spontaneous expression of India's reawakened energies and returning youth. In quite a happy phraseology he somewhere remarks that if the destinies offered India self-government, on her behalf, he would say “ No, thank you. We shall not have what we have not deserved.”

Though in practice, the ideal of self-government



within the Empire would be quite acceptable to him, in theory he sees in the so-called "Reforms" nothing but a westernising of Indian standards and institutions, unless the whole bureaucratic machinery is swept away, and the government is remodelled along lines in conformity with Indian ideals, and the national genius for government. Apropos of the tinkering reforms demanded by political agitators he says :

"The whole Civil Service might be Indian, but the civil servants have to carry out orders—they cannot direct, they cannot dictate the policy. . . . One civilian, 100 or 1,000 civilians in the service of the British government will not make that Government Indian. There are traditions, there are laws, there are policies to which every civilian, be he black or brown or white, must submit, and as long as these traditions have not been altered, as long as these principles have not been amended, as long as that policy has not been radically changed, the supplanting of European for Indian agency will not make for self-government in this country."

His opposition to bureaucracy in India springs out of his suspicion of bureaucracy in any part of the world. And he would rather have a tyrannical and conservative exponent of bureaucracy so that the evils of the system may be driven home into the people's imagination—rather than a liberal and sympathetic representative whose beneficence might render people callous in regard to the insidious workings of an evil system. On this point Professor Graham Wallas observes :

“ A Hindu agitator, again, Mr. Bepin Chandra Pāl, who also had read psychology, imitated Lord Lansdowne a few months ago by saying : ‘ Applying the principles of psychology to the consideration of political problems we find it is necessary that we . . . should do nothing that will make the Government a power for us. Because if the Government becomes easy, if it becomes pleasant, if it becomes good government, then our signs of separation from it will be gradually lost.’ Mr. Chandra Pāl, unlike Lord Lansdowne, was imprisoned shortly afterwards, but his words have had an important political effect in India.” *Human Nature in Politics*, p. 177).

Pāl’s most effective weapon—which he has seldom employed—would be *passive resistance*. In a country of teeming millions like India, a revolution based on physical force is unnecessary. For the achievement of political liberty,—according to him—passive resistance is enough. Boycott Manchester *dhotis* that drape your bodies and Western institutions that drug your souls—and you are free. To the writer’s best knowledge, Pāl has always repudiated physical force as a solvent of political difficulties and has insisted on the need for moral regeneration and the development of self-respect. From an article that he contributed in 1915 to the *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*, entitled “ The Coming of Surendra Nath,” it seems that he had then relinquished his previous utopian idea that the machinery of government could be easily paralysed through the systematic boycott by the people of British courts of

justice, colleges and schools. He called the period of severe unrest, when forces of anarchism reared their heads in India, as the kindergarten stage of the Indian political life when people did not take the right orientation of things and did not know how to use the new-born forces.

But it must not be considered that Pāl is reactionary in his attitude towards the progressive elements in modern culture. Being one of the finest products of Western culture Pāl feels more at home in London than even in Calcutta. Besides, he is free from the social trammels that impede freedom of movement and efficiency in action.

Pāl believes—or used to believe—that the key to the future lies in the hands of the people themselves. This point he elucidates in these trenchant words :

“ If the Government were to come and tell me to-day ‘ take Swarāj,’ I would say thank you for the gift, but I will not have that which I cannot acquire by my own hand. Our programme is that we shall so work in the country, so combine the resources of the people, so organise the forces of the nation, so develop the instincts of freedom in the community, that by this means we shall—*shall* in the imperative, compel the submission to our will of any power that may set itself against us.”

Pāl is thus no fire-brand, but a visionary with a hatred of shams and deep instinctive love for reality. But he has initiated no practical experiments whereby his ideals could, even in part, be transmuted into action. At the same time, he is the chief pioneer in a movement of ideas according to



which self-respect is better than supplication and national freedom better than the so-called political reforms that may be nothing more than a lubrication of the wheels of the bureaucratic machinery.

Pāl is thus a philosopher of the political renaissance, a Mazzini of the Indian stage of transition. His ideals have spread their contagious influence through the ranks of moderates and extremists alike, and much of the virility of the Indian National Congress propaganda to-day is due to its permeation with the teachings he vigorously delivered during the period of severe tension in India, both in Bengāl and in Madrās, even though for years he has studiously abstained from attending meetings of the Congress.

His coldness towards the Congress is not so much due to his extremist leanings, as to the thread-bare discussions that formed the sequels to the moving of resolutions at the annual sittings of the Congress. The sight of venerable delegates mounting the Congress platform, and reading learned dissertations or delivering perfervid orations, once a year, would only move Pāl's ridicule. He would feel that the Congress resolutions left the authorities quite unmoved, and that it were sheer waste of breath to deliver learned speeches to which those at the helm of affairs were not even willing to lend an attentive ear. He would rather see the evolution of a superior type of character and self-confidence in the people which would *urge* the Government to advance, or rather *demand* that it should progress.

Pāl is a powerful journalist and wields a very facile pen. He writes to various Indian periodicals and

to some English and American journals besides. He is at his best while writing of the forces that have created new India.

During his last visit to England he delivered several lectures on India, but though his speeches were learned and instinct with fervour, his blunt, tactless presentation of truths did not win for him many new converts. With his transparent sincerity he lacks the rare gift of judicious utterance. A mere intellectual presentation of opinions, tinged with burning conviction, but regardless of the psychology of the people addressed, is not always a successful operation, however rich the content, or brilliant the method of delivery.

He is, beyond dispute, one of the ablest orators of New Bengal : while his love for the Motherland borders on religious frenzy.

Apropos of his programme for passive resistance he says : " We can make the Government impossible without entirely making it impossible for them to find people to serve them. The administration may be made impossible in a variety of ways. It is not actually that every Deputy Magistrate should say : I won't serve in it. But if you create this spirit in the country the Government service will gradually imbibe this spirit, and a whole office may go on strike. This does not put an end to the Administration, but it creates endless complications in the work of Administration, and if these complications are created in every part of the country, the Administration will have been brought to a deadlock, and made none the less impossible, for the primary thing

is the prestige of the government and the boycott strikes at the root of that prestige. . . . We can reduce every Indian in Government service to the position of a man who has fallen from the dignity of Indian citizenship. . . . Passive resistance is recognised as legitimate in England. It is legitimate in theory even in India, and if it is made illegal by new legislation, these laws will infringe on the primary rights of personal freedom. . . . Without positive training no self-government will come to the boycotter. It will come through the organisation of our village life ; of our Taluks and districts. Let our programme include the setting up of machinery for popular administration, and running parallel to, but independent of, the existing administration of the Government."

We are of opinion that during the initial stages of the political agitation in India, Pāl's views and ideas have been of considerable utility in arousing the people from the slumber of centuries. But under existing conditions in India when political self-consciousness is expressing itself in definite demands, only organisation along peaceful lines would achieve what *intellectually*, Pāl has stated with such precision and force. Propaganda must become systematic, practical and be conducted on intelligent lines, with the hard-headedness of a bank manager and the specialised aptitude of the expert.



## XIII

### ARABINDA GHOSE

“ Truth is with us, Justice is with us, nature is with us, and the law of God, which is higher than human law justifies our action.”—From ARABINDA GHOSE’S manifesto on *Indian Nationalism*.

LIKE Bepin Chandra Pāl, Ghose stands for a new movement of ideas, and not as leader of a political organisation. But if Pāl’s ambition has been to impregnate the minds of the young with a new vision ; Ghose’s ambition was to capture existing organisations for the spread of his ideas. Pāl has been anxious to see the triumph of high ideals over petty details ; Ghose strongly felt that only through action could enthusiasm be reinforced or vision enlarged.

Thus we see that right up to the moment of his tragic retirement from public life into political exile in Pondicherry, Ghose was anxious to capture the Indian National Congress, together with other “ extremist ” leaders, and to change it into an institution for educating public opinion and as a training ground for political thinkers. He also felt the need for reorganising the district and provincial conferences, so that work may be continuous throughout the year, that the delegates may really represent

the people, and that the new spirit of self-confidence may be enthused into the masses, among whom systematic propaganda must be carried on throughout the year. He felt that the anæmic intellectuals of the Congress only represented themselves, so long as the masses were not well-grounded in ideas of public rights and duties. He was convinced that the annual efforts of the Congress were ridiculously inadequate, and their suppliants' attitude only betokened moral inertia that disguises lack both of training and of vigour.

His emergence into the political arena was like a meteoric flash. We find him in 1905 resign his educational appointment in the Baroda State, to seize on the opportunities which the serious turmoil in Bengal over the partition by Lord Curzon, had freshly created. He saw his chance and felt that no sacrifice was too great when the service of the motherland demanded it. He helped in the organisation of the National Council of Education in Bengal, which provided indigenous schools, and also encouraged able and enterprising youth to proceed to Japan, America and Europe, for scientific and technical pursuits.

He was anxious to reorganise the district and provincial conferences so that these might develop into media for the stimulation of interest in public matters in ever-widening circles. He infused fresh life into journalism in Bengāl. This is not the time nor the place to point out indiscreet utterances in the papers edited by him. We only wish to point out his valuable services in

arousing people from their lethargy into vigorous action.

In point of intellectual ability, powers of organisation and leadership, and religious earnestness, Arabinda Ghose stands in solitary splendour in political India. His simplicity, his excessive puritanism, his love of contemplation and his charming manners, enhanced ten-fold the hypnotic hold that he had on his followers and admirers. But differences of opinion with his colleagues on the nature of national education came to a head, with the result that Arabinda Ghose resigned both his professorship in Calcutta and membership of the Council. His strongly-worded articles in the *Bande Matram* brought him into open conflict with the Government, but he escaped with impunity. Along with his brother Barendra he was charged with complicity in the famous Manicktola bomb case.

Before Mr. Beachcroft, a prisoner in the dock was awaiting his trial—in handcuffs—who a few years before had established his intellectual superiority to the presidency magistrate in the classical tripos, at King's College, Cambridge. That prisoner was no other than Arabinda Ghose, the brilliant scholar that had easily floored the Indian Civil Service Examination in London, but failed to pass the riding test. After this disappointment Ghose went to Cambridge, where he won a scholarship and later took first-class honours in classics.

Mr. Beachcroft could find no incriminating evidence against Arabinda. So he was honourably acquitted. But the police would constantly shadow



him, and later we find him flee into the French possessions with a view to evade a warrant of arrest issued against him.

Arabinda Ghose's strenuous political activities not only synchronised with the rising to flood-tide of the Bengalees' indignation over the partition fiasco, but with the coming to birth of a new philosophy of life, based mainly on the teachings of the Bhagvadgita, that affirmed the supremacy of action over mere passivity and quiescence, and issued a trumpet-call, in the name of Dharma, to deeds of heroic self-sacrifice, renouncing the lower objects of desire and the hope of reward or fear of consequences. For the first time in modern Indian history, there was a resurgent tide of self-confidence that swept over Bengal—and other parts too—leading people to recognise, as never before, that contemplation should be a mere hand-maid of action, profoundly religious in content and altruistic in aim.

Arabinda, no doubt, derived some of his inspiration from Bāl Gangadhar Tilak, who, after his elaborate researches into the Vedas and the Gita had come, long before to similar conclusions, and whom Arabinda admired as a courageous political leader. It is also known that at various conferences, they would meet and have intimate association with each other on various important problems.

At the famous Congress in Surat, Arabinda read his now historic manifesto on Indian Nationalism, which is a masterpiece both in point of style and lucidity of exposition. In the manifesto Ghose makes it as clear as possible that *hatred of the*

*English is quite alien* to true nationalist propaganda, but that the present bureaucratic *régime* leaves no scope for full development to the heirs of an ancient civilisation, spiritually superior to all forms of Western culture. And the right note is sounded when he delivers the assurance: "Truth is with us; nature is with us; justice is with us, and the law of God which is higher than human law justifies our action."

In a series of articles on Karma yogin (realisation through action) Arabinda issued the new gospel of self-sacrifice in thrilling accents and in a manner that electrified the imagination of the rising generation. But in spite of his organising power and consciousness of the need for action, Ghose reaches the summits of spiritual exaltation when absorbed in meditation. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, in his "Awakening of India" draws a graphic picture of Arabinda Ghose—or some one exactly resembling him: Mr. MacDonald in the course of an interview was impressed with the tranquility of mind combined with the aggressive political outlook of one who saw India "exalted on a temple throne," and "across whose path the shadow of the hangman falls," and who believes that India's future is as much bound up with the success of political organisations as on the intensification of spiritual fervour.

During the war, Arabinda Ghose is reported to have sent messages of sympathy to the Government of India, from his political exile. Interviewed by a correspondent of a Madras paper, Arabinda is said to have expressed satisfaction, in 1916, at the increas-

ing friendliness prevailing between the British and the Indians, admired the presidential address of Sir S. P. Sinha, and expressed his conviction that Indian politics should not be petty or parochial, but worthy of the grand traditions of a great nation.

Arabinda has a magnetic personality, which combined with a sturdy independence of thought and breadth and freshness of outlook singled him out, during his short-lived career in India, for unique and distinguished leadership. It is said by his admirers that even to-day he is helping India, if only through contemplative exercises, and is sending currents of spiritual energy through the life of the nation. This might be a matter of opinion but even so, it gives one some idea of how potent is the influence that he exercises on those that come under his spell.

When the history of the Indian Revolution—*not* anarchism—comes to be written, there must be full two pages dedicated to Bepin Chandra Pāl and Arabinda Ghose.

Referring to Ghose, Sir Valentine Chirol says: ("Indian Unrest," p. 90) "With this gospel of active self-sacrifice none can assuredly quarrel. . . . For him British rule and Western civilisation for which it stands threaten the very life of Hinduism. . . . That Mr. Arabinda Ghose holds violence and murder to be justifiable forms of activity for achieving that purpose cannot properly be alleged, for though he has several times been placed on his trial, and in one instance for actual complicity in political crime—namely in the Manicktolla bomb case—the law has so far acquitted him."



In fact, Ghose holds that spiritual communion and utmost freedom from earthly entanglements lead not only to individual emancipation but to the galvanising of the national consciousness to deeds of high heroism. He is a Swarājist and Vedantist, believing that the achievement of Swarāj will develop Indian spirituality, and that constant absorption in prayer and meditation and the realising of one's unity with the primal consciousness through selfless action, will facilitate the coming of Swarāj.

## XIV

### LĀLA LĀJPAT RAI

NONE among Indian politicians has been less understood and more misunderstood both by friends and hostile critics than Lajpat Rai, whose political record marks a series of what appear like petty persecutions, and a whole farrago of blundering accusations. It has been his sad lot to be condemned without being tried, and to suffer without any tangible evidence being produced against him. On the other hand, whenever he has launched a suit against his maligners, as, for example, against some powerful Anglo-Indian dailies, he has always come out triumphant. Suspected on the basis of secret reports concerning himself, watched under secret instructions by reason of his unpopularity with the powers that be ; deported without trial in 1907 under the express sanction of the Liberal Lord Morley : such are some of the unhappy episodes in the long tragedy of Lajpat's Rai's career.

Lord Morley in approving of Lajpat Rai's deportation wrote back to Lord Minto : " The only comfort is that my immediate audience will be not at all unfriendly in any quarter of it, though radical

supporters will be critical, and Tory opponents will scent an inconsistency between deporting Lajpat, and my old fighting of Balfour for locking up William O'Brien. I shall not, however, waste much time about that. I have always said that Strafford would have made a far better business of Ireland than Cromwell did, but then that would be an awkward doctrine to preach just now." (See Lord Morley's "Recollections," p. 218: Macmillan & Co.). In another passage Morley remarks: "I see that ——— says that this drastic power of muzzling an agitator will save the necessity of 'urging deportation.' He must have forgotten that I very explicitly told him, that I would not sanction deportation except for a man of whom there was solid reason to believe that violent disorder was the direct and deliberately planned result of his action."

It may, perhaps, be quite relevant here to press home the consideration, with all due deference to Morley's judgment, that if there was "solid reason to believe that violent disorder was the direct and deliberately planned result" of Lajpat's action, he could certainly be tried according to law, under the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code or any other code, instead of being denied justice and the opportunity of defending himself.

In the course of the present discussion we must necessarily confine our review of Lajpat Rai's activities to the period prior to his departure for America, for we have no means of finding out what changes, if any, have come over his convictions or methods. For prior to Sir George Cave's



discovery that Lajpat Rai's allegiance has been suborned from the Empire, we knew of him both in India and in this country as, no doubt, radical in his views, and occasionally rather injudicious in his utterance, but always a constitutional agitator and opposed to methods of physical violence. On the outbreak of war, he was in this country and issued eloquent and forcible appeals to young Indians in England, asking them to rise to the occasion and loyally serve the Mother Country, in any capacity that was possible, in her hour of danger. In fact, we understand that he travelled throughout England and Scotland, inviting recruitment to the Ambulance Corps organised by Mr. Gandhi, for the benefit of Indian soldiers, in the earlier stages of the war.

Lajpat Rai was born in the Tehsil of Jagraon, of poor but intelligent and self-respecting parents. His father came early under the influence of Swami Dayananda Saraswati. Lajpat's mother was very affectionate and sensible, and through her strong personality, fostered in the son habits of frugality, simplicity and straightforwardness in speech and behaviour. It is but fair to say that she had a prominent share in moulding the young boy's character, and whatever impresses us to-day in Lajpat's life as of dour strength and bearing the impress of sincerity may, in part, be traced quite consistently to his mother's dominating influence on him. Equally potent, as a formative influence in Lajpat Rai's life, was his father's love of truth and country. We learn that Lajpat's father was a great admirer of Sir Syed Ahmad Khān,

before the latter adopted reactionary views on Indian politics and assumed a position of indifference, if not of hostility, towards the legitimate claims and the constitutional demands of the Indian National Congress.

It is said that he was very fond of discussing important Indian subjects with as many villagers as came under his influence, and that he instilled into their unsophisticated minds fondness for free and frank discussion, and interest in matters that affected India's well-being. Young Lajpat matriculated from a school in Jullundhur, and won a scholarship that enabled him to take his B.A. degree from the Government College, Lahore, with distinction. Later he took the diploma of Licentiate-in-Law from the Lahore Law College and soon after settled down to legal practice in Jullundhar. It is ample credit to his legal acumen, industry and popularity that in a comparatively short span of years he built up a large practice and amassed a modest fortune. During this period, he was always eager to promote religious and social reform in his spare time, and was always solicitous for the welfare of the masses. It is true of Lajpat Rai that he was seldom engrossed in schemes of personal self-interest, and that he always exhibited a ponderous capacity for public spirit without whose development he felt that political and social discussions were mere moonshine.

But success and talent naturally gravitate towards large metropolitan cities that offer abundant scope for initiative and genius, and Lajpat Rai soon became the centre of attraction in Lahore, the capital of the

Punjab. Having already served his probation and made considerable headway, he did not at all find it an up-hill task to establish himself as a prominent member of the local bar, so to speak. At the same time, it must be remembered, that even during his palmiest days Lajpat Rai never came up, in point of intellectual brilliance and forensic aptitude to the doyens of the Bar. The unique position which Lajpāt Rai for long continued to occupy in the public life of the Punjab is due more to the transparent honesty of his character and his abounding enthusiasm for service, rather than to any unique capacities of thought and mind. It is more as a political and social reformer of the advanced type that Lajpat Rai has attained pre-eminence; not as a scholar, jurist, lawyer or even constructive political thinker. He takes life too seriously, is endowed with but little sense of humour and scores more through his saintly manner of life than through any more conspicuous individual qualification.

It also has to be remembered that the Government of India are mainly responsible for placing Lajpat Rai on a pedestal of distinction, through their continuous suspicion of him and a prolonged persecution, which to Western readers may appear as a strange perversion of humour. Deported without trial; suspected without any formal production of corroborative evidence; branded as a fire-eater wielding tremendous influence over the masses; such treatment is enough to convert any mediocrity into a national hero. And when we realise that on the



eve of Lajpat's deportation, the Lahore Arya Samāj itself repudiated any friendly associations with him, and denounced his tactics as extremist and lacking sanity—a treatment to which Lājpat Rai later responded with the chivalry, characteristic of him—can we express astonishment at the natural revulsion of popular feeling in his favour that acclaimed him as a political martyr and converted him from an innocuous political reformer to a political enthusiast?

Lajpat Rai was considerably aggrieved, in the earlier stages of his political career over Syed Ahmad's political apostasy, after his knighthood by Lord Lytton, more especially because he was prepared by his father to look upon the Syed as a prophet of sweeping political reforms. As a result he wrote a series of "Open Letters" to the Syed. These letters are characterised by his usual earnestness and burning conviction, though not by any great felicity in expression.

During the Rawal Pindi and Lahore disturbances Lajpat Rai strove, to the best of his ability, to convince the authorities that the best method of treating unrest was to remedy the grievances that fostered it, and that mere drastic suppression was at best futile. But the powers that be brushed aside his recommendations as only calculated to promote further discontent, and saw in him not one that was anxious to throw oil over troubled waters, but one whose only aim was to intensify discontent and rally round him the forces of rebellion.

We are far from suggesting Lajpat's impeccability as a political leader and from impugning the motives of the authorities. The Government may have in their possession abundant evidence that might have justified even a more vigorous mode of punishment than was actually meted out to him. All that we say is that the evidence, if any, at the disposal of the authorities was never marshalled, the public have had no chance to judge of the *character* of that evidence, and the courts of law where he could be brought to justice, under existing provisions dealing with disaffection of varying magnitudes, were never used. And we are certainly within our rights, without holding any brief for Lajpat Rai, to allege that the mere whispering, in vague and nebulous words, of the most serious accusations of appalling criminality, without resort to courts of competent jurisdiction, leaves us rather unconvinced and conveys the impression that the men on the spot were not only ill-informed in regard to the causes engendering discontent, but were seized with panic, a phenomenon by no means uncommon where Governments are not responsible to the people themselves.

Finally: we must bear in mind that when the oppressive canal rates in the Chenab colony were rescinded, there was considerable abatement of resentful feeling. Even Lord Morley was strongly of opinion that these taxes gave rise to grave discontent.

In reference to his other activities, Lajpat Rai may, without any exaggeration, be called the soul of the Arya Samāj. Though it has not fallen to his lot to

be a whole-time worker like Principal Hans Raj of the D.A.V. College, Lahore, or Mahātma Munshi Ram of the Gurukul at Hardawār, he has organised numerous branches of the Arya Samaj ; collected funds for the college and general propaganda work ; delivered courses of lectures and generally infused a new spirit of earnestness and social service among the educated young Arya Samājists. During the famines of 1897-1898, and 1899-1900, Lajpat Rai, at considerable personal risk and inconvenience, organised a famine relief party and administered relief to at least 1,700 distressed Hindu orphans in Rajputana, Kathiawar, parts of Bombay and the Central Provinces. The first orphanage at Ferozepur, opened under the auspices of the Arya Samāj, and in healthy rivalry to Christian mission ary organisations, was established principally at the suggestion of Lajpat Rai. Appeals issued on behalf of the Hindu Orphan Relief movement were generally responded to, by all sects and castes of Hindus.

As a direct sequel to these philanthropic activities, numerous orphanages were established in various parts of the Punjāb, new industries were started for the benefit of the famine-stricken, and young college graduates offered their services most generously, bore the chief burden of responsibility, taking considerable risks and accepting no remuneration. The philanthropic work referred to was not confined to famine relief, but included medical relief. It gained from the Government recognition as an organised movement with definite aims and a high standard of efficiency and success to its credit.



Further it brought together the normally divergent sects and creeds and threw the upper classes and the poor people together. Mr. Lajpat Rai in his published report of the Arya Samāj's relief work makes the following significant statement: "But still more blessed are those who paid for their own bread and did not spend even a pie of public money on their own food. Personally, my gratefulness to them is beyond words. They have earned the everlasting gratitude of their people by setting such a good and noble example of self-sacrifice to the other members of the rising generation. Let us hope that these services are an earnest of what may be expected of them in the future. This record of their work is a bright ray in the sunshine of Hindu revival, to which we all look with hope and pleasure" ("Arya Samāj: an Indian Movement," p. 218).

Even on his return from the now historic deportation, Lajpat Rai did not relax his philanthropic efforts. To quote from Lajpat Rai's own account of his work.

"Famine Relief in 1908.

"In 1908, however, the movement was expanded and general relief was aimed at. The following extracts from the *Census Report* of the United provinces of Agra and Oude will give some idea of the extensive scale on which work was done during the famine:—

"The emissary of a well-known Arya leader came round distributing relief during the famine of 1907-8 and visited a certain village near which I had encamped. After his visit, *the recipients of his*

*bounty, being not quite sure whether they were doing right in accepting private charity, when Government was looking after them, sent a deputation to ask me whether they might keep his gifts. I, of course, told them to take all they could get; and then their leader asked me who was the man (the Arya leader) who was distributing money in this wholesale way."* (cf. "The Arya Samāj: an Indian Movement," by Lajpat Rai, pp. 218-219).

Since his deportation, he has once been on a political mission to this country in the company of Messrs. Jinnah, Bhupendra, Nath Busu, the late G. K. Gokhale and others.

Mrs. Annie Besant pays him the following compliment :

"Lajpat Rai is a 'whole-hogger' in his political attitude, impatient of compromise and not heedful of questions of detail. It is difficult to satisfy him with illusory schemes of mere tinkering reforms, since he is a shrewd, hard-headed thinker, not easily carried away by sentiment, unless it be love for the mother-land." The writer's own impression about Lajpat Rai's speeches is that they breathe out sincerity and the spirit of self-reliance, but they lack dignity and balance. They arouse high spirits among friends, but only bitter animosity in the hearts of critics. He lacks the tact, the power of appeal to the generous and chivalrous emotions of his critics that was so eminently shown in Gokhale, and which won for the latter numerous converts even from the ranks of stout opponents.

In spite of his keen patriotism and various services

to India, in the domain of politics, Lajpat Rai is at his best in the social and religious sphere. It has been the writer's privilege to attend several meetings of the Arya Samaj when he would speak on ethics and metaphysics of religion. Lajpat's extensive study of English philosophical literature, his grasp of the fundamental issues and his able, if also somewhat ingenious exposition of Vedic texts was always a real intellectual treat. Like his master Swami Dayananda Saraswati he would read back into the Vedas the latest discovery of science and the latest exposition of metaphysical doctrine. But this ought to surprise no one. Even in this country, the race of mid-Victorian divines is by no means extinct, who would either try to place under the ban modern and progressive movements, or trace their origins to some text in the Book of Genesis or to some vague prophecy in the Book of Revelation.

Lajpat Rai has been a pillar of strength to the Arya Samāj. Though most of the Samaj's propaganda owes its inception to the inspiring teachings and personality of Dayananda, it is difficult to exaggerate the value of Lajpat Rai's co-operation in maintaining the Samajic activities at a high level.

Finally, no one has striven more to induce his co-religionists as individuals—not as members of a corporate body—to accept the political ideals as formulated by progressive India. He has always felt that though the Arya Samaj, as resting on definitely religious foundations, must always assume neutrality in political matters, yet if individual



Arya Samajists refrained from identifying themselves with healthy, peaceful, political developments, the Samāj itself may degenerate into an obscurantist body. To quote his own words: "The harder the fight, the greater the opportunities of showing the strength which our forefathers have bequeathed to us. These Samajes, Colleges, Sabhas, Leagues, Associations, Congresses and Conferences are all means to an end. They mark the various stages in our onward march to nation-hood. . . . The Arya Samāj has to remember that the India of to-day is not exclusively Hindu. Its prosperity and future depend upon the reconciliation of Hinduism with that greater "ism" —Indian nationalism—which alone can secure for India its rightful place in the comity of nations. Anything that may prevent, or even hinder, that consummation is a sin for which there can be no expiation." ("The Arya Samaj," p. 283).

## SURENDRA NATH BANNERJEA

“ We are the subjects of the proudest Empire in the world. We glory in that Imperial connection which makes us the participators of that noble heritage of freedom, which is the birthright of every Englishman. Let the Russians\* come if they choose. They will find behind the serried ranks of one of the grandest armies in the world, the countless millions of a loyal people, united by contentment, by gratitude, by willingness for self-sacrifice, ready to guard an Empire that has meant in India, the establishment of peace, the diffusion of knowledge, and which I trust, will yet mean the political enfranchisement of her vast people.”

SURENDRA NATH BANNERJEA.

\*The substitution of “ Germans ” for “ Russians ” will bring this old quotation quite up to date. [The author.]

It is the barest justice to the Edmund Burke of Bengal,—for that would be a very apt characterisation of the famous political leader and nation-builder with whom we are now dealing—that very few surpass him, even if some equal him, in point of the vigorous appeal he directs to the emotions. The writer has had the privilege of attending meetings of the Indian National Congress and public gatherings of a political or quasi-political nature, where Bannerjea’s powerful and burning eloquence had electrified vast audiences and swayed their feelings as does the powerful gust of wind sway the blades of corn in a field. But it must also be said to Bannerjea’s credit that when the feelings of his audience are raised to a pitch of intense excitement,

he strikes the right note of moderation and sanity, realising that the reason why feelings should be purged of their dross in the fiery furnace of idealism, is that they should become a motive force in constitutional agitation. "Evolution and not Revolution" was the burden of his political counsels to the radical and ardent spirits of young Bengal, when demands for the reversal of the partition were growing insistent and even clamorous, and when Boycott and Swadeshi were the only ringing war-cries, whose echoes drowned every other interest.

Bannerjea's is pre-eminently a restraining influence in the sphere of Indian politics—not the restraint whose exercise involves a surrender of independent action or suggests a playing for governmental favours, but that which tempers idealism with sanity and which foresees the futility of irresponsible action. He would always warn his countrymen of the dangers implicit in "playing with the fire" and in allowing their imagination to run away with itself. But he would never allow the counsels of restraint to degenerate into mere reactionary influences or to serve as a wet blanket on the newly awakened enthusiasm of the young. His sound political instincts tell him that new-born forces that make for freedom and progress cannot be suppressed, but should be wisely harnessed to well-considered schemes of reform. His persistent refusal, on the one hand, to inflame the dangerous passions of an excitable crowd and his equally sustained opposition to the reactionary attitude shown, from time to time, by the conservative bureaucracy in India, have in the past



somewhat compromised the position which he would worthily fill under a liberal *régime*. His unique service consists in his placing himself at the head of the agitation against the partition of Bengal and in favour of encouraging Indian industries—which laudable resolution took an organised shape under the Swadeshi movement.

From his place in the Imperial and provincial Councils he has always lifted his voice in favour of reforms well-known to students of the National Congress propaganda. Thus whether the demand is for enlisting Indian volunteers on terms of equality with Europeans, for the defence of their country, or whether the request formulated is for separating judicial functions from executive control, or whether the demand be for the retrenchment of military expenditure and the diversion of revenue to more constructive purposes, Bannerjea's attitude has been uncompromisingly liberal and consistent throughout his long and honourable career. Never has he deviated one iota from the principles that he imbibed in his earlier years, and whose application to India gave promise, according to him, of her future greatness. Being at times extreme in his moderation and at others moderate in his extremism, he has somehow missed that popularity that falls to unscrupulous fire-brands or those that see visions of governmental patronage after a short-lived political activity. But still, without doubt, he occupies a very prominent place in the esteem and affection of both old and young Bengal.

Technically, Bannerjea may not be considered a

whole-time worker in the service of India. But if only we tried and penetrated below appearances, we shall discover that whether as proprietor and editor-in-chief of the *Bengalee* or as founder of the Ripon College and now as its principal, Bannerjea's time and attention have been fully occupied in the promotion of objects that have profound national importance. True, he has not practised the austerities of Gokhale, or Jesuit-fashion renounced emoluments and position, yet efficiency in the political sphere may remain quite unimpaired even if the leader does not submit to privations or extreme simplicity. Besides, Bannerjea's whole tenor of life is and has been, quite simple and unostentatious: any means that he may have amassed have been by sheer exertion and conspicuous ability, and quite apart from his engagement in any commercial enterprise that has not a direct bearing on his political propaganda. In the Council chamber as on the public platform, in his capacity as editor or while playing the *rôle* of principal, Bannerjea's one all-engrossing passion has ever been to engage in the service of the mother-land.

Unlike some other political enthusiasts, included in this series, Bannerjea has, from the beginning been quite untrammelled by conservative social tradition or narrow religious orthodoxy. Though Hindu to the back-bone, Bannerjea has always appreciated deeply the beautiful and inspiring teachings and ethics of Christianity, and being a life-long member of that progressive Hindu denomination called the Brahma Samāj, has ever insisted on the

need for maintaining a conciliatory attitude towards other religions. Besides, he has been just as unrelenting and unintermittent in his attempts at reforming the Hindu religion, as he has been in insisting that the fresh breath of British Liberalism may blow on the surface of the stagnant waters of bureaucracy. He married a wife of his own choice, who fully entered into the spirit of his life-work, and to whom he showed the spontaneous loyalty that springs from a happy and suitable selection. His sense of public duty may be judged from the interesting little incident that on the day when his heart was filled with a sense of utter bereavement over his wife's death he pulled himself together and dictated his usual leader for *The Bengalee* newspaper. His general attitude towards social reform may be summed up in the brief excerpt that we take from *The Bengalee* :

“ We have worshipped the goddess of Sakti (*i.e.*, energy) for centuries ; how is it that through those very centuries we have remained so weak and helpless as a nation ? We are the devout worshippers of ‘ Sarasvati ’ (the goddess of learning), and at the same time have received a scant share of her blessings. The priests who are the monopolists of the religious rites and ministrations are for the most part as innocent of Vedic knowledge at the present day as the ‘ Sudra ’ was in the days when the gates of knowledge were shut against him by the iron rules of caste. We offer our devotions to ‘ Lakhshmi ’ (the goddess of wealth) every recurrent year ; and we remain none the less a nation of paupers.



“ The orthodox Hindu makes a fetish of certain rules of hygiene formulated by his ancestors in the dim past ; he regards it as sin, for instance, to take his meals without bathing, or to remain in unwashed clothes for more than a day ; but with all his religious devotion to the traditional rules of cleanliness, he betrays a strange indifference to the principles of sanitation evolved by modern science. . . . It requires little reasoning to convince oneself that the extreme conservatism of the orthodox section of the Hindu community . . . which looks upon the least modification of existing institutions as a profanity and desecration is necessarily the negation of progress.”

Mr. Bannerjea came into touch with the champions of British Liberalism, during the formative years of undergraduate life in London, and the influence exercised on his mind by such illustrious Liberals as Gladstone, Bright, Cobden and others, during these impressionable years, has produced in him a mentality that is at once friendly disposed towards the great traditions of democracy and freedom in England, and is suspicious of the secret intrigues and the intricate diplomatic juggleries practised by bureaucratic governments. Professor Henry Morley, of University College, London, took an especial interest in Bannerjea while the latter was, in 1869, qualifying for the I.C.S. competitive examination in London. Bannerjea's gratitude for the numerous little acts of kindness shown by the professor was quite enthusiastic and forged links of affection for England. Like the late Sir

Pheroz Shah Mehta, Gokhale and others, Bannerjea would seriously read—"devour" may be the right word—best English masterpieces, not simply to acquire cultured style, but also to imbibe ideas that burned with such radiant glow in the pages of Burke, Macaulay, Mill, Spencer, and Morley, to mention only a few from among the Intellectuals that were Bannerjea's favourites. It is surprising how much he learned from these men, and especially what valuable assistance he almost subconsciously derived in the matter of command over style from these past-masters in style. English admirers of Mr. Bannerjea almost instinctively liken him to Burke and Gladstone. And when in 1910 he came as India's delegate to the Imperial Press Conference, and later delivered a series of lectures on India, English literary critics compared him to Cicero, Burke, Macaulay and Gladstone, not only having regard to his mastery over style, but also his vigour of thought and the high moral platform which he always took.

Clearness of political aim and the concentration of all energy, and intelligence on the achievement of that aim, be the obstacles ever so formidable, is another outstanding strain in Bannerjea's character. While on a political mission to England, he very politely but quite firmly repudiated Lord Morley's dictum that the partition of Bengal was "a settled fact." And the tenacity with which he held on to his hopes that the partition would yet be annulled, when British statesmanship awoke from its dogmatic slumbers, called forth from the late Mr. W. T. Stead the compliment that he was Mr. "Surrender-not

Bannerjea." Equally firm and polite was he in airing his views on the Indian situation to Lord Haldane—on the same occasion as above—and his lordship was quite impressed with the strength of his conviction and his invincible faith that things will work out all right in the end.

There is a little romance connected with his visit to England. It is said that his mother did not approve of his voyage to England, but Bannerjea seized the opportunity when Romesh Chunder Dutt and Behari Lal Gupta were sailing for England, and ran away from home! The illustrious trio were an acquisition to University College, London, and showed remarkable powers of industry, intelligence and general reliability in character. They soon competed for the Civil Service Examination and passed with credit, if not with distinction, Bannerjea, Dutt and Gupta taking high places. By a curious misfortune, which for India turned out to be a lasting blessing in disguise, Bannerjea was, after three years of service as Assistant Commissioner of Sylhet, asked to resign because of the following unfortunate incident.

A commission was appointed to enquire into certain irregularities alleged to be done by Bannerjea, while the latter was an Assistant Commissioner. Their report was adverse. Those were days when encroachment on the sanctum of the service by Indians was zealously guarded against. The lenient view entertained by his brother officers was that as a young officer, Bannerjea was rather lazy and careless. But the stricter interpretation of his fail-



ing was that he deliberately made wrong entries in official documents. In any case, a stern rebuke or suspension of promotion for a short period might well have been an adequate penalty. But officialdom surpassed itself by demanding the instant dismissal of such a brilliant acquisition to the service, for his first dereliction of duty.

He appealed to the Secretary of State for India personally, who refused to intervene, and upheld the decision of the Indian authorities. Bannerjea faced this great calamity—he was quite impecunious by this time—with great fortitude, never allowing this unpleasant memory to influence his views or compromise the friendship he has always cherished with England's great men.

Mr. Bannerjea is a confirmed believer that permanent friendship between England and India is necessary for the welfare of both, and hence he has never swerved from his ideal of political autonomy within the Empire. Yet no one has offered a more scathing indictment of that Neo-Imperialism—represented by such able and influential exponents as *e.g.*, Lord Curzon—which teaches that Asiatic nations must sit for all time at the footstool of European civilisations, and that Indians must “think imperially,” that is to say, according to Lord Curzon, that they should hug and kiss their chains as if these were symbols of distinction and regard their captors as if they were a guard of honour.

But this reactionary policy and purblind vision should not, according to Bannerjea harden the hearts of Indians against the more progressive and enlight-

ened views concerning Empire which obtain in democratic circles throughout Britain.

No one has given saner advice or lent more powerful support to the cause of Swadeshi in Bengal as elsewhere. He had sufficient political sagacity to see that the particular occasion when resentful feelings against the partition rose to fever-heat and Sir Bamfylde Fuller's policy of "Divide and rule" produced very unhappy, if not tragic consequences in its train—that that was the psychological moment when the swollen volume of political unrest should be diverted along profitable channels, to fertilise many a barren field of action, as also to provide legitimate outlets for energies which might easily become dangerous, if not properly utilised. His advocacy of Swadeshi disarmed the boycott propaganda carried on by the National Volunteers.





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